



How to Start A YouTube Ministry

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Seventh-day
Adventist[®] Church

NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

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Introduction

People come to YouTube for entertainment and education. It's not an exaggeration to say that video is king! Internet video traffic accounts for [80% of all consumer Internet traffic](#). YouTube is the [second-largest search engine](#) and the [second most-visited website](#) in the world. This is where young people spend most of their time online.

Creating a YouTube account is very cheap. All you need is a camera and a device to upload from. YouTube is great for communicating ideas quickly and provides a storage place where your content never dies. It can be revisited or reposted as many times as you want.

In this guide, we'll take you through a step-by-step process for starting a YouTube channel from scratch. We strongly encourage you to take the time to go through this guide completely and review the resources before starting your YouTube channel. Or, if you already have a channel, use this guide to evaluate where changes need to be made.

If you're not yet convinced that your ministry should consider creating a YouTube channel, review the following statistics.

YouTube Statistics (May 2020)

- More than [30 million daily users](#)
- [Two billion monthly active users](#)
- [Five hundred hours of video](#) are uploaded every minute.
- [Five billion videos](#) are watched on YouTube every day.
- The average viewing session on mobile phones is more than [40 minutes](#) (an over 50% increase per year).
- YouTube [reaches more 18–34 year olds](#) than any cable network in the US.
- [Six out of 10 people](#) prefer online video platforms to live TV.
- [93% of Millennials](#) go to YouTube to learn how to do something.
- [86% of viewers](#) regularly use YouTube to learn new things.
- [70% of viewers](#) use YouTube to help solve a problem.

YouTube Demographics (May 2020)

- [73%](#) of US adults **use YouTube**.
- [62%](#) of YouTube users are **males**.
- [78%](#) of US **male adults** use YouTube.
- [68%](#) of US **women adults** use YouTube.
- [81% of 15-25-year-olds in the US](#) use YouTube.
- More than [15% of YouTube's site traffic comes from the US](#).
- [The 35+ and 55+ age groups](#) are the fastest-growing YouTube demographics.
- [75% of Millennials prefer YouTube](#) over traditional television.
- [51%](#) of YouTube users say they visit the site daily.
- [37%](#) of the coveted 18-34 demographic is binge-watching.
- [94% of American 18- to 24-year-olds](#) use YouTube.
- [85% of US teen boys](#) (ages 13-17) use YouTube daily.
- [70% of US teen girls](#) aged 13-17 use YouTube daily.
- [70%](#) of YouTube watch time comes from **mobile devices**.
- YouTube services are available in more than [100 countries in 80 languages](#).
- [95%](#) of the global internet population watches YouTube.

If you have the calling to reach young people, YouTube is a must. This guide will help you determine relevant topics for your target audience and position your videos to maximize reach and watch time.

Getting Started

The number-one skill you need for YouTube is **communication**. Since YouTube is largely a place where people come to learn, being able to communicate an idea clearly and efficiently is key. People come to YouTube seeking answers and trying to solve problems. The Church should be the voice that answers and provides guidance for life's difficult questions and challenges. This means that content is more valuable to a viewer than great lighting or even video quality. It's okay to learn as you go. The Church should be the leader in creating content that answers people's questions about life and helps them solve their problems. Don't let your current skill level hold you back from sharing the gospel and Christ's teachings.

You'll need to know how to do elementary **editing**. Being able to cut out errors or splice together footage is valuable and easily learned. In fact, if you need help with developing these skills, there are hundreds of tutorials on YouTube. There is also free software that is more than sufficient, such as Windows Movie Maker for PC and iMovie for Mac.

To start, focus on what you do best. Remember the Church is described as a body for a reason. If possible, build a team that has the same burden on their heart as you, but with different skill sets. We all have been given different spiritual gifts and skills. For example, if you need beautiful graphics, but you couldn't draw a straight line with a ruler, outsource that task to a designer in your network. Or if you're a team of one, use intuitive design platforms like [Canva](#) that make design easy with ready-made templates, graphics, and stock images.

Understanding Your Target Audience for Effective Communication

Good communication is when you communicate in a way your audience understands.

You may feel like you know how to use social media platforms for personal sharing, but writing (scriptwriting) to achieve a marketing/evangelism goal requires much more thought and strategic planning. This section is designed to give you a framework for successfully defining your target audience and determining how to speak to them in a way that is relevant, encouraging meaningful engagements. It is essential that we not only communicate clearly, but that we also take the time to deeply understand our audience. It doesn't matter if *you* know what you mean. Put yourself in your audience's shoes, and speak to them accordingly. Speak to your audience in a way and with the words that enable *them* to understand and connect with your message. REMEMBER, EMPATHY FIRST.

This means that, when we communicate in the digital space, we must speak the language of the platform and recognize the cultural expectations and norms prevalent in the space, as well as within the culture(s) of the people in our target audience. Without careful research, our words and intentions can easily be taken the wrong way, inadvertently offending and pushing away the very people we are trying to reach.

As Christians, we want to reach and include everyone. This is our ultimate goal as disciples. However, from a specific ministry standpoint, this approach ends up reducing the relevancy of the message and spreads efforts too thin for significant impact. After all, a standard marketing rule of thumb states:

*If you try to reach everyone all the time, you'll end up
REACHING NO ONE.*

Each person, ministry, and local church is uniquely equipped and positioned to reach different types of people. Therefore, it is vital to understand who your audience is before you create content, write a single social media post, or spend money on social advertisements. This section will help you learn how to effectively shape your messages and content to match your audience's needs and reach them effectively, no matter their age, gender, ethnicity, location, or situation.

Determine Your Target Audience

The first step in reaching your audience is to develop a clear picture of who you are talking to. As with any ministry, pray for guidance and wisdom from the Lord. Then begin with surface-level demographic information. Use the space below to fill in the information for your ministry's target audience.

Surface-Level Demographic Information

- Location

- Age

- Gender

- Ethnicity/Language

- Interests

Once you've determined the surface-level characteristics of your target audience, work down to a deeper level, which will help shape your messaging and the kind of content you'll create.

*Create deep connections by identifying with
CORE VALUES, NEEDS, AND COMMON EXPERIENCES.*

People no longer fit into neat categories, so we must connect with them on a more profound level, transcending the standard marketing demographics of age, ethnicity, gender, language, location, and interests. If you can dig deeper, your audience will be loyal to your brand because you resonate with them at their *core*.

The best way to do that is to investigate their needs, experiences, values, and perceptions. Conducting surveys and interviews is one key way to collect more information. Then start asking yourself questions that will help you to get inside the minds of your audience members. What motivates their actions? What makes them who they are? What do they have in common? How can I speak and write in a way that my audience will find relatable? What do they value? What do they actually need?

Examples of needs may include: a spiritually supportive community, affordable education, employment, affordable medical care, safe spaces for their children, mentorship opportunities, a better future, healthier relationships, self-improvement, Christian guidance on real-life issues, food security, or practical life-skills training.

Use the space below to write down possible answers for your target audience.

Deep-Level Characteristics

- Needs

- Core Values

- Shared Experiences

- Motivations

- Additional Insights

Cultural Empathy in the Digital Mission Field

The concept of “cultural empathy” is well known in the physical mission field, and its principles should be applied to the digital mission field. We live in a world of intersecting cultures or communities, and, therefore, our definition of culture must expand. Many now find themselves between cultures and functioning in multiple communities simultaneously. To identify the unifying threads between seemingly dissimilar people, we need to first unpack their many cultural influences.

These cultures are potentially endless in variety, but can include:

- Platform
- Age groups or generations
- Gender
- Language(s)
- People groups: race, ethnic, immigrant v. first generation, etc.
- Current location: city/suburbs/country
- In school vs. out of school
- Lived in a specific geolocation their whole life vs. transplant
- Faith groups, life-long Adventists vs. converts vs. former Adventists/Christians
- Professional groups vs. homemakers vs. working mothers
- College-educated vs. blue-collar workers
- Offline social clubs vs. online identities and groups
- Poverty vs. middle-class vs. wealthy

[Click here](#) to learn more about this concept.

Use this section to unpack your own intersecting cultures and consider how they may shape your core values and needs.

Now, use the following space to write the potential overlap in cultures found within your church, community, ministry, or target audience. How might they influence behavior and needs? What unifying factors can you identify?

Internal vs. External

Are you speaking to Adventists or non-Adventists? Your language may change based on the answer to this question. We must modify the way we communicate to effectively reach different audiences without creating barriers. For example, when we are talking to our friends, we use certain vernacular that tends to be more playful and friendlier, but when we are talking to our boss or elders, our persona is more serious and professional. The same is true with evangelism and discipleship. We may commonly use certain words such as “Sabbath” or “haystacks” that could seem foreign or confusing to non-Adventists. The list below offers guidelines on how to distinguish between internal and external audiences.

Internal

- Church members
- Church leaders
- North American Division constituents
- Bible study groups
- Pathfinder/Adventurer participants
- Those raised in the Church/long-time attendees
- Faith communities: city/neighborhoods/ministries

External

- Broader community: neighborhoods/city/state/metro areas
- Businesses
- Related causes or non-profit missions
- Local news

Be careful not to use Adventist-speak when addressing external audiences. Use the space below to indicate who your ministry communicates with on a regular basis, if they are Adventist or non-Adventist, and how you currently interact with them. What changes should you make? What barriers to faith or entry might you be accidentally creating with words?

Audience Personas 101

When communicating to your audiences, visualize actual people—their interests, cultures, wants, needs, and expectations—to refine your voice. You will probably need to create unique personas to represent different target groups within your audience. According to *The Guardian*, personas can be simply defined as:

“A fictional character that communicates the primary characteristics of a group or segment of your audience and takes into consideration needs, demographics, motivations, and environments.”

Determining your audience personas can help you develop and write content that will be relevant and useful to your audience. The best personas are often created by simply talking to your audience, but social media insights, website analytics, and surveys can also prove very useful. Personas give a human face to a collection of information, and they allow you to classify groups for different messaging campaigns and programs. The best personas combine both quantitative and qualitative information.

Below is an example of a persona:



About Bryce: Adventist College Persona

Age: 17

Education: High school senior

Interests: Business, sports, camping, meeting other young people, discipleship training

Salary: \$3,000 a year

Location: Berkeley, Calif.

Family: Adopted, married parents, no siblings, Hispanic

Goals: Finding a good-paying and meaningful job, mentoring younger peers, finding a girlfriend, finding a Christian friend group

Challenges: Finding friends with similar morals, avoiding drugs/alcohol, food insecurity, feelings of rejection by his biological parents and struggles to connect with others, struggles with religious doubt

Values: Fair justice system, the environment, good reputation, strong character, fairness, good citizenship, technology and flexibility, diversity, leadership training, and experience

Fears: The unknown, poor work–life balance, affording college, student loan debt, getting a good job, rejection, finding purpose/meaning

Preferred platforms for media: Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube

Messages applicable to Bryce: We are all adopted into God’s family. Our church/school/ministry is a place to belong and a place to grow. Connection to others, connection to God. Diversity and purpose. Mentorship opportunities and support for leadership training or education.

Social media personas are developed based on your target audience, as defined earlier in this section. The key is finding out what those people want and need; the rest is simply compiling those qualities into a made-up person. As a Church, we need to constantly find ways to reach our audience for the kingdom in the best, most efficient way possible. Creating social media personas is a valuable exercise that enables us, as communicators, to step into others' shoes and view life from their perspective. Personas help us develop empathy with our audience.

Use the following framework to develop your own personas:

- Name:
- Age/Gender:
- Culture/Race/Community:
- Education:
- Profession:
- Income:
- Location:
- Family Situation:
- Faith:
- Goals:
- Challenges/Needs:
- Values:
- Fears:
- Platforms/Channels for Promotions:
- Messages That Would Resonate with Them:

Special Note about Generation Z

The Church and the wider Christian community has become increasingly concerned with reaching Generation Z, people born approximately between 1997 and 2012 (Pew Research Center). However, the Church has not yet adapted to meet the needs of the generation before them, Millennials. We should be concerned, as these two age groups represent the largest divergence from traditional Christian values and lowest participation in faith institutions we've seen. To reach and retain these generations, we must reframe our approach based on their perspectives.

"Generation Z lives in a totally different world and interacts in a totally different way than any generation before them. When asked what the most important historical event was in the USA in the last 20 years, they responded, "The release of the iPhone." Most older people would say the terrorist attacks of 9/11" (Adam Fenner, Director, Adventist Learning Community).

From Gen Z and Millennial perspectives, their answer makes sense, given that technology and digital communications have completely reshaped society, how we connect with each other,

how we shop, and how we live. They have grown up in an almost entirely digital world, and they relate to technology in a more integrated fashion than any other generation before them.

So who is Gen Z? What you should consider when targeting this age group:

- By 2020, people born after 1995 will be **one-third of the total population in North America** and account for **40% of all US consumers**.
- **It is the most diverse generation** in US history; they don't see diversity unless it's absent.
- **The majority are non-white**, mostly Hispanic.
- One of every ten will marry across racial/ethnic lines.
- Fifty-five percent prefer to buy clothes online; 53% prefer to buy books and electronics online.
- **They use technology for everything:** grocery shopping, dating, socializing, studying, entertainment, communication, reading the Bible, cooking, etc.
- Seventy percent watch **two or more hours of YouTube a day**.
- **They prefer less public social media** (example: Snapchat).
- Gen Z has an average attention span of eight seconds; 11% have ADHD.
- **They prefer images, icons, and symbols** (think emojis and gifs) over text.
- **This group is the least religious generation ever:** Only 63% are sure God exists; 35% are completely unaffiliated religiously. Twenty-eight percent have never attended a religious service, and 13% are atheist. This may seem discouraging, but it actually shows a huge opportunity if we are willing to meet the challenge.

What are their core values and needs (broadly speaking)?

- Sixty percent **want their work to benefit the world**.
- Seventy-six percent are **concerned about humanity's impact** on the planet.
- **They are worried about success**, experienced a weak economy early on, and have seen the impact of the student loan crisis on Millennials.
- Fifty-seven percent **prefer to save over spending** (cost-benefit analysis, very pragmatic).
- **They interact with media (two-way interactivity) and want it to work from anywhere they are located to fit their lives** (example: online education, telecommuting, Uber/Lyft vs. personal vehicles, Airbnb vs. hotels).
- **They prefer one-on-one social media conversations** over lectures.
- They want **leadership opportunities**.
- **They believe in a social gospel: action, not words.**

Source: Adam Fenner, Director, Adventist Learning Community

What do Gen Z's values mean for the Church? It means we must innovate for meaningful impact. If we don't, we only have ourselves to blame for continuous departures. Change is hard, and the Church is notoriously slow to adapt. Now is the time to act if we really are concerned for the salvation of the next generations. Institutions are not permanent. After all, in the words of W. Edwards Deming, "It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory." The good news is that God never fails. He will always have a people, and He has called us to participate in His great work.

In Summary

We must put our assumptions and judgements in the trash. Too often, we create programs and content based on our own interests and passions or based on what *we* think people need, according to our own perspectives and biases. Use the audience factors discussed in this section to make data-informed decisions about your audience, and then create messaging and content based on what you discover. If you're still not sure where to start, spend more time engaging with your target audience, and ask more questions. Find out directly from them what they need, what they feel will improve their lives, and what will inspire them to develop a closer relationship with God.

To reach people, we must become a student of their culture: no judgment, only acceptance and adaptation. No one should know more about your audience than you do. Strive to become an expert on the people you are trying to reach.

How to Get Found on YouTube

The way to bring natural traffic to your channel is to position your video so the people looking for it can find it. This process is called SEO (search engine optimization), and the same basic steps can be used for any digital platform. YouTube is most often used as a search engine. Find content, write content, and curate content related to top YouTube searches. Frame your posts to pique curiosity and answer people's questions, addressing their deepest longings. You can get top search data from any search engine, YouTube, and other social media trend tracking sites. Try it. Start typing in a question, and let the search engine auto-finish. The top results represent the most popular search queries. In other words, you will see what large numbers of people are searching for online. It gives you a sneak peek into their needs, worries, nagging questions, and often hidden yearnings. This is how you listen.

Recommended steps

- **Make a list of key phrases.** To determine the best way to frame your message, start by seeing what people are searching for related to your topic. Make a list of key phrases, focusing primarily on the strongest and niche topics. Recommended tools are VidIQ, TubeBuddy, and [Google Ads](#). These tools are also great resources to help you identify good titles and tags based on search volume and competition.
- **Investigate how people are searching on YouTube.** Next, get to the search bar on YouTube. Step into the shoes of the seeker. Start asking questions about the topic you are interested in producing content around. Think empathetically about how seekers might phrase their question and the words they would use. Pay special attention to the autocomplete suggestions. These suggestions represent real things people are searching for regarding your topic. Once you search for something, you can see how many results are available for that topic on the upper right-hand corner above the first-listed video. Your goal is to be on that first page of listed results to be seen. When starting your channel, do not start by targeting the most common videos topics searched. For example, if you search "funny cat videos," you will find over two million results. Instead of trying to show up on the first page of that search, you need to get much more specific. Get creative; think of all the ways someone would search for this topic on YouTube, and consider how you can make your content more specific to narrow down the competition. Record the results word-for-word on your key phrases list.
- **Utilize Google Keyword Planner.** Okay, time to get nerdy. Pull up [Google Ads](#). Under "Tools," select the "Keyword Planner." This tool is built to show you how often people search for a specific word or phrase. Start copying phrases from your key phrases list into the keyword search bar. Helpful analytics about how many people search for this

topic and what the competition looks like will appear. Google will also give you results for phrases that Google thinks are related to the subject. Pay attention to these suggestions, and if there are ones you don't already have on your list, copy them down. Again, watch exactly how they are being searched. A simple punctuation mark makes a difference. If there is a comma in how it is being searched, copy that down. If not, leave it off. With this list, you will be building a database of ideas to talk about in your video, according to what real people are asking about.

- **Write a script.** Writing a script is a valuable piece of the process that will give your video a competitive edge. A script gives YouTube more information to help better position your video as people search for your topic. In addition, less than 10% of YouTubers take the time to write and provide a script. Simply transcribe what you will be saying in your video into written form. This will also help you communicate more clearly. Be sure to [upload the script with your video](#) so people can download it and keep it as notes if they wish. When transcribing, your goal is to include as many exact phrases from your keyword phrase list into your script as possible. Think about how you can talk about each phrase in your video. Remember, from a ministry perspective, these are questions from real people to whom you are hoping to provide answers. Be conversational in how you include these phrases into your script. Make it feel natural. Write out everything you will say in your video, and [upload it along](#) with your video.

Once this is done, create your video, and follow the guidelines outlined in the “10 Commandments of Video Missions” section. This will help position your video in the best possible way, not only to be found, but also get watched. Be sure to follow these steps because your content cannot lead people to Christ unless it is viewed.

10 Commandments of Video Missions

1. Thou shalt not upload thy church service to YouTube.
2. Thou shalt not have GAS (Gear Acquirement Syndrome).
3. Thou shalt have a clearly defined target market.
4. Remember your channel strategy, and keep it focused.
5. Thou shalt optimize thy thumbnails, titles, and tags, and keep them consistent.
6. Thou shalt optimize thy channel page.
7. Thou shalt upload consistently.
8. Thou shalt engage with comments.
9. Thou shalt always continue learning.
10. Thou shalt continually study thy analytics.

1. Thou shalt not upload thy church service to YouTube.

How to create an effective video content strategy for your church or ministry.

One major question that you should ask yourself about any piece of content uploaded to social media is, “Why would anyone care to watch or listen?” While uploading your full worship service will certainly be a blessing to your current church body, think about each online viewer as a first-time guest.

Before a prospective viewer can get to the actual message, many ministries force them to sit through 20–30 minutes of content that is irrelevant to them. Why should someone who has never been to your church care about the announcements, special music, or offertory?

Instead of uploading your program’s entire livestream to YouTube, a better approach would be to optimize your content for this specific platform once the live event is over. Realize that YouTube is a search engine; it’s a social community with its own subculture and set of social norms. Upload just the individual sermons or messages from your evangelistic series or camp meetings, and optimize the videos to be found via search. More on this later.

Break your livestreams and longer videos into smaller segments for distribution and community engagement on YouTube and other social media platforms such as Facebook and IGTV. Consider breaking your videos into two- to three-minute, easy-to-watch clips that highlight the key points of an inspiring message, or pull out the children’s stories into their own dedicated playlist.

Your goal should be to create as much evergreen content as possible to promote your message, church, or ministry to seekers. Capturing the attention of your audience several different times can help build trust and value regarding your ministry. Evergreen content can be shown to new audiences repeatedly while retaining its intrinsic value, meaning it doesn't become less interesting or less relevant over time. Be sure to avoid including the date in the title of your video or mentioning it in graphics or dialogue during the selected message. Perception is important in outreach. The more dated your content seems, the less relevant it will appear, even if it still carries tremendous value.

Next Step

Questions to consider before uploading your videos:

1. Will my audience still care about what is covered in this video?
2. How in-demand is the information being presented?
3. If I was a part of my audience, would I spend time watching it?
4. What is the overall replay value of the video(s)?
5. Is the content in easy-to-digest segments that my audience can view on the go?
6. Does this video address a common question or solve a problem?

2. Thou shalt not have GAS (Gear Acquirement Syndrome).

How to start a video ministry on a budget.

Contrary to popular belief, running and starting a ministry's YouTube channel doesn't have to break the bank. It is a myth that you must have a six-figure budget to succeed. With the advent of social media, the bar for acceptable picture and video quality has been lowered. Every one of us is used to the notion of watching hours of content per week that was shot on a cell phone.

However, with all the options of lenses, cameras, and sound equipment vying for your attention, it can be incredibly overwhelming when trying to figure out what is actually needed to get started. Rest assured, even with limited knowhow and a moderate budget, you can create great content.

While it can be easy to be distracted by the shiniest and newest camera or microphone on the block, never forget that content is king. Higher-quality equipment can be helpful, but it is not always necessary, especially when you are first getting started. Beware of contracting GAS (Gear Acquirement Syndrome). When I (Justin Khoe) started my channel, I was working with an almost non-existent budget, and I paid for everything out of pocket. Eventually, valuable content will always beat out expensive equipment.

The most important thing is to **get started**.

Below is the recommended equipment for three different budget levels: a low, medium, and high budget.

The prices below represent approximate costs as of 2020. Prices may change dramatically due to 2020 economic challenges.

	Low	Medium	High
Camera	Start with what you may already have! A smart phone. \$0 extra cost OR Canon G7X \$500	Cannon 70D \$920 OR Sony 6300 \$898	Canon EOS 5D Mark IV \$3,100 OR Sony a7r III \$3,098
Lighting	Home Depot DIY lights <\$100	Neewer ring light \$110	Softbox Each \$60
Sound	Wired lapel <\$30	Rode Micro \$60	Rode Videomic Pro \$230
	ZoomH1n \$130		
Editing (PC)	Windows Movie Maker (PC) \$0 OR iMovie (Mac) \$0	Adobe Premiere \$21+ a month OR Final Cut Pro \$300	

Note: If you are working with a church, you might already have audio equipment or lighting available to borrow.

Next Steps

Determine your budget.

Choose the camera, lights, and microphone.

Start creating!

3. Thou shalt have a clearly defined target market.

How to define a target market.

As odd as it might sound, to reach a large audience, you must stop trying to reach everyone! Think of your YouTube channel as a TV channel. Each channel has a purpose and an intended audience. For example, ESPN focuses on sports, the Cooking Channel on food, etc.

What is your channel about, and who is your channel for? Is it for women? If so, how old are these women? Are they single? College-educated? What type of hobbies do they have?

The more you can clearly define your target market, the more success you'll have in breaking through the noise and reaching your audience.

Next Step

Refer to the "Understanding Your Target Audience Section" and write a three- to five-paragraph description of your ideal audience member.

4. Remember your channel strategy, and keep it focused.

How to develop a channel strategy and keep it focused.

Your channel or content strategy is simply the direction you plan to take with your videos to help achieve your goals. The easiest way to determine a channel strategy is to ask yourself a few questions about your audience. What are they interested in? What kinds of questions do they have? What types of problems can you help them solve? Instead of guessing at the answers to these questions, spend time with these people, and ask them these questions! Refer to the "Understanding Your Target Audience" and the "Content Strategy" section of this guidebook to help you through this process.

Once you determine who your target audience is, ask, "Why should they care about my content?" Develop an overall value proposition for your channel based on the needs or core values of your target audience. The value proposition answers two questions: "What do you offer?" and, "Why does it matter?" What value can you deliver to your target audience through your videos? Once you can answer this question, clearly promote your value in each of your videos. Each video should have the underlying objective of moving you toward your strategic goal.

Then develop a content creation strategy that balances engaging your current audience with attracting new viewers through highly searchable and sharable content. If your channel is new or small, plan to gear around 75% of your content toward expanding your audience base. Once

you get established with tens of thousands of subscribers, switch the balance to favor fan-centric, community content to keep your audience engaged.

There are essentially four types of content:

- **Searchable or discoverable content** is based on what your target audience is already searching for online and will help you get discovered. These videos introduce people who never heard of you to the value you provide through your channel and content, ideally converting them to subscribers. Utilize tools like [Google Trends](#), YouTube search, and other related channels in your niche to do your homework. Look for topics that audiences are actively choosing to engage with, and create content accordingly.
- **Community content** is where you speak directly to your subscribers and provide unique (related) information that they didn't know they needed but increases the value of your channel. These are designed to build a relationship with your existing audience and grow their trust. This content is just for your subscriber base who already knows you and your mission. These videos will be primarily found in your fan base's YouTube subscription feed. Typically, video views are lower and slow down after a few weeks, as newer videos have entered the feed.

Establish a secondary value in all your videos based on the perceived relationship your audience can develop with you. Many people will watch your videos and engage because they feel connected to you. The on-camera personality should seek to strategically integrate the relational aspect of your channel into the videos to foster a sense of community. People want to feel like they are getting to know you, trust you, that you're credible, and that they would enjoy spending time with you in person. People are drawn to authenticity and can relate more easily when you demonstrate your humanity and vulnerability.

Your content strategy should ultimately serve to support your ministry's goals for being on the platform. Refer to the section on "Developing a Strong Foundation" to determine what those goals are and possible key performance indicators.

Next Step

Identify five other YouTube channels that create the type of content that you are looking to create and start watching their content. Consider this activity market and competitor research.

5. Thou shalt optimize thy thumbnails, titles, descriptions, and tags and keep them consistent.

How to optimize your thumbnails, title, descriptions, and tags and keep them consistent.

While it is true that content is king, it is also true that marketing is queen. On YouTube, the things that most influence your discovery and channel growth (other than quality of content) are your thumbnails, titles, and tags.

Each video that you create should have one focal point or one problem that you're trying to address. Your thumbnails, title, description, and tags should all work in unison to communicate that message and to optimize the exposure of every piece of content you produce. YouTube's algorithm weighs all the elements of your video—views, length, titles, tags, etc.—to determine whether to promote that particular video in related search queries, suggested videos, and on the homepage. Most people will find your video through a search query or a related video, so it's important to have a solid strategy to increase your exposure. Therefore, knowing how to optimize your thumbnails, title, and tags is essential to growing an audience.

Best practices for each element

- **Thumbnails** often perform best when they tease a value or a story. Don't give away the punch line of your video in the thumbnail. Seek to create an emotional response and to give the prospective viewer an incentive to click on the video. Pique their curiosity, giving them a reason to watch.

Use a brief amount of large-font text on your thumbnail that allows easy readability. Help your text stand out by adding a shape behind it. This text can serve to reinforce the video's connection to a specific topic, increasing the likelihood that a person will select your video among the competition. To interrupt their scrolling, get them to actively think about the thumbnail and how it relates to their search query or topic that interests them. This will better position your video for success.

Keep in mind the average viewer will be watching the video on their mobile phone, so you want to make sure the thumbnail you create is clear and any text is readable on a small screen. Human beings prefer to connect with other human beings. Your viewer will have an easier time relating to the subject matter, and you're more likely to invoke an emotional response if you include images of people, especially faces, in your thumbnails. Make sure their faces are large enough that you can actually see the whites of their eyes in a small thumbnail. You should also incorporate your overall branding strategy into the design of your thumbnails and your logo. This will help train your audience to easily identify content from your channel.

If you're not a photo editing pro with tools like Photoshop, no worries. Use free online tools like [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com) to create your thumbnail from a clear screenshot from the paused video or from a high-quality photo you snapped during the video shoot. Use Canva's YouTube thumbnail template to make sure you have the correct dimensions: 1,920x1,080 pixels for HD resolution. When taking screenshots, make the video full screen to increase the clarity of the image. Increase the contrast, saturation, and sharpness on your thumbnails to make the image and colors pop, helping you stand out from other videos. Thumbnails perform better when they are about 30% oversaturated and oversharpened, because this helps a small image to pop on a mobile device.

In summary

- Choose an image and/or graphics that stand out and pique curiosity.
 - Include large-font text that teases a value or a story.
 - Include people's faces, and make sure they are large enough that a viewer can see the whites of their eyes on a small screen.
 - Incorporate your branding and logo.
 - Make sure the thumbnail is easy to understand on a small screen.
 - Add extra contrast, saturation, and sharpness.
- **Titles** should reflect the vernacular of the platform. Use tools like YouTube auto-fill in the search bar to find out what language people are typing in to search for specific topics. Basically, start typing your question, and let YouTube finish it for you. Look for very specific video ideas, and use the exact wording or variants of the resulting search phrases for your titles. More nuanced titles will help reduce competition and rank your video higher in search queries.

Look at what other popular YouTubers are doing with their titles in videos covering the same type of subjects. Pay attention to the trends and what other creators are doing on the platform. This will help you perform better in related video suggestions. Model your video titles and other elements after popular videos related to your topic. Normally, the typical number of views a video can expect to garner is around 5% to 10% of the total number of subscribers to the channel. When videos exceed this, it's an indication of strong content, a popular topic, strong title, thumbnail, and keywording. When you model your own videos after competitor's high-performing videos on a similar topic, you increase the chances that viewers will find your content in the related videos and ultimately subscribe to your channel.

Craft a title that piques the curiosity of the prospective viewer, without giving away the answer. Your title should make them think: "I never really thought of it that way" or "I wonder where they're going with that." Your goal should be to get them intrigued in the same way your thumbnail hopefully will. Your thumbnail and title work together as complements. Therefore, the text should not be the same in both, but rather work

together to give the viewer an incentive to watch.

Avoid including dates, as this may reduce the perceived relevancy of your video, and it takes up valuable space in the title field. Moreover, omit any type of numbering system you may have developed for organizing your videos, as this also does not add value. An exception to this rule may be a series of videos that must be watched in order. In this case, we recommend creating a playlist specific to each series to enable people to binge watch all the videos, if desired.

However, most viewers will not watch your videos in order and will, in fact, stumble across your videos randomly. When choosing your title, consider the perspective of someone completely new to your content. This is the first video they will watch out of your entire collection. Avoid any language that may give the impression this video is not for the prospective viewer or that the content will not be relevant on its own (i.e., leave out the date and sequence number).

In summary

- Model your title after search phrases.
 - Pay attention to trends related to your topic.
 - Craft a title that piques curiosity.
 - Avoid dates and numbering systems.
- **Tags** are used to help people find your videos when they type something into the YouTube search bar. The first thing you want to do is make sure you have a common tag used throughout your entire YouTube channel. When all your videos have one common tag, it acts as an indicator to YouTube that each video is related to all the other videos in the library. When someone watches one video, there will be a greater chance that the suggested videos will also be from your channel. For example, Justin Khoe uses “jkhoe” as a tag in all his videos. You’ll want to come up with something unique to your channel that no one else will be using.

Don’t waste any of your tag space with random or one- to two-word tags. These tend to be very ineffective, as competition levels for those tags are too high. “Bible study” will be an incredibly difficult tag to rank for. “How to study the Bible” is a more nuanced tag with less competition and a better chance for your video to stand out. “How to study the Bible for teenagers” will be even more effective. Look for search phrases that are four or five words or more to narrow your competition for searches or related videos. Start with these longer phrases (including the title of the video), then find related permutations of those same tags. For example, “how to study the Bible” can be supported by the following tags: “how to study the Bible for yourself,” “how to study the Bible for beginners,” “how to study the Bible for women,” etc. If there are words that are frequently misspelled by people, such as “Isaiah,” you may also want to include the most

common misspellings. The combination of these techniques increases the chances that your video will rank higher in search results and related videos, bringing new people to your channel from other channels and keeping your viewers engaged with your content.

Don't mislead viewers. Only use keywords that are related to your video content, as disappointed viewers can give feedback such as downvotes and negative comments that can hinder your video's performance.

Special note: You can only use 500 characters to encompass all of your various tags; if you go over that limit, you can't upload or save the video. Be sure to prioritize the strongest tags. Use software like [tube buddy](#) to help you identify strong keywords and phrases.

In summary, follow this model for tags:

- Your unique channel tag
 - Four- to five-word search phrases related to the video (including the title of the video)
 - Variations on your search phrases (including commonly misspelled keywords)
 - Avoid random tags and one- or two-word tags.
 - Don't use misleading keywords.
-
- **Descriptions** should not be neglected, as they are factored into YouTube's and Google's algorithm for search ranking, increasing discoverability. The first two sentences of your description are the most important regarding ranking, so be sure to reflect the title of your video, and include a call-to-action whenever possible.

Providing description copy (at least 250 words) enables search engines to index your video for search query optimization. In addition, links to your website, specific webpages, resource requests, etc. will also factor into the search engine optimization of both your videos and your website. By providing both calls-to-action and links, you both encourage your viewers toward meaningful action and make it easy for them to take the desired action.

For long videos, make it easy for people to find what they are looking for within the video. For example, a 30-minute video on Bible prophecies may cover many passages. Provide time stamps (lists of relevant timecodes) for the various sections in the description to allow viewers to skip ahead easily and find the section that most interests them.

Checklist

- Begin your description with the search phrase (or a variation of it) that you used to determine the title.
- Write your description copy using keywords to optimize search result ranking.
- Include backlinks to your website, blog, and social media profiles to improve general SEO and visibility.
- Include calls-to-action where relevant.
- For long videos, include time stamps for topic-specific sections.

If you've already established a library of content on YouTube, go back and optimize each of these elements. This will cause YouTube to reevaluate each of your videos and their ranking, helping to better position your existing content.

These four elements combined help increase the authority of your channel content, but don't expect immediate results or for your first video to go viral. YouTube also assesses the quantity of content your channel has produced and gives more authority (and better rankings) to channels that have more content because there is more for people to watch. Expect to put in significant amounts of time to create a wealth of content using these best practices.

To be successful on YouTube, you need two pieces. First, you need valuable content that answers people's questions, meets their needs, makes a difference in people's lives, and is optimized with proper thumbnails, titles, descriptions, and tags. Second, you need consistency when it comes to putting content out on the platform. Do this, and you will see results.

6. Thou shalt optimize thy channel page.

How and why to optimize your channel page.

Before subscribing to your channel, most people visit your channel page to get a bird's-eye-view of what to expect. It is the number-one place where people will decide to subscribe to your channel and, therefore, requires careful thought.

It's important to understand visitor behavior on the platform. Often, people will watch and like a video that has come up in their suggested videos. Then they click on the name of the creator, which directs them to the channel page. What they find will influence whether they decide to subscribe to the channel to receive that content in their regular feed of videos. Many times, they're looking for a few specific things, such as: How many videos has this creator uploaded? (after all, what's the point of subscribing to a channel with only two videos?); how often do they upload? (once a week, twice a week?); what types of videos are they offering? They may also check out your most popular videos. Spend time organizing your channel page to help answer

these questions and create a brand look that appeals to the target audience you are trying to reach. Work with a professional designer, if necessary.

To start, consider your **channel name** and how it can tie into your ministry's branding and goals for being on the platform. Refer to the previous section of this guide on branding to help you identify which direction you would like to go. The name "That Christian Vlogger" immediately communicates to the viewer that they can expect video blogs of Christian content, making the value of the channel instantly apparent. The more common route is to choose the name of a personality or organization. However, this may make it more difficult to communicate purpose and value. Ask, "Does this channel name make a person want to subscribe to the channel?" When an individual uses his or her name, it implies that the channel contains content that is more personal and relatable to the viewer.

Be careful to avoid names that only have internal meaning and don't convey a clear message or value to the broader public. This is especially important for evangelistic channels seeking to reach people outside the faith who may not be familiar with Christian terms. People may misinterpret your content as not being for them.

Next, develop strong copy for your YouTube channel's "**About**" page. The first sentences are the most important, as this copy will pop up in the hovercard for your channel in several places around YouTube, such as the comment and suggested channels sections, as well as the snippet text in the YouTube search results. Therefore, it's very important that you are intentional with how you craft this copy. These first few sentences should call out your target audience, helping the reader identify that this content is for them. Also, pitch the value of your channel for that target audience. Ask yourself, "Why should they prioritize my content over another similar channel?" or "How will they be affected by my content?" Assume that the reader has never heard about you before and has no idea what your channel is about. Then take the next paragraph to describe what your channel is about and what a person can expect if they were to subscribe to your channel, including your posting schedule. Additionally, weave keywords that are relevant to your channel into the copy and the content you're creating. Avoid just listing keywords at the end of your "About" page. Finally, you can include links at the bottom of the "About" page that direct to your website and other social media profiles.

The **channel trailer** is a video that is shown very prominently at the top of your channel page for prospective new audience members. Once they hit "subscribe," they will no longer see that video. Therefore, create a short channel trailer that speaks directly new people, letting them know what your channel is about or what your goal is, how often they can expect new content (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly), and what kind of content they can expect on a regular basis (e.g., vlogs, comedy, inspirational, etc.). Your channel trailer should feature you addressing the camera directly. If possible, give them visual demonstrations of what your channel will show them with quick clips (i.e., your b-roll) while you speak. These elements combined help create

an engaging trailer that sets clear expectations, enabling the viewer to better decide if this channel is for them.

The **channel header** is found at the very top of your channel and is an opportunity for you to set your brand apart from other channels. *Branding* helps communicate a greater perceived value. Make sure your branded look is professional, clean, and modern. Include your upload schedule in your header, and use graphics and text to communicate what the channel is about. Consider including a close-up of your face (if you are the “face” of your ministry) that enables the viewer to see the whites of your eyes on a small screen. Be sure to also include relevant social media links to your ministry’s other platforms.

Consider which videos you want people to see first. One strategy is to highlight your most popular videos in a playlist. By featuring your highest-viewed videos, people are more likely to give them a chance because a significant number of other people have already watched them, indicating they are worth your time. This is called *social proofing*. Another strategy is to feature your highest-converting videos. These can be identified by looking at your channel analytics to see which videos convert viewers into subscribers the most often. Your most-viewed videos may not effectively convert viewers to subscribers.

Spend time organizing your videos into additional **playlists** based on related topics, choosing your best-performing videos for each topic. This can help create a string of binge-worthy content, increasing the time people spend watching and engaging with your content. You may even want to create a playlist dedicated to new subscribers titled something like “New Here?” or “New to the Channel?” This will allow a newcomer to get to know you and your channel through a curated playlist of videos designed to introduce them to your personality and content. Humans connect better with other humans and stories, so share some of your back story here.

Checklist for next steps

- Choose a channel name that ties into your brand and purpose for being on the platform.
- Write a compelling “About” page.
- Design a channel banner that communicates your upload schedule (e.g., “New videos on Mondays & Thursdays at 9 a.m. PST”).
- Produce a channel trailer (30- to 60-second overview of what the channel is all about).
- Create at least three to five playlists that demonstrate the types of content subscribers can expect.

7. Thou shalt upload consistently.

You should upload consistently to help grow your video ministry's audience.

Your audience should know when to expect more content from you so they can *look forward* to that content. Many people build a weekly podcast or show into their regular routine. Your goal is to help your audience develop a habit of watching your latest video on a schedule. This predictability helps keep your viewing and watch time analytics steady as your viewers build habits around regularly engaging with your videos.

Every channel will be a little different. Some channels upload daily, others weekly, and, less commonly, monthly. When determining your channel's upload frequency, consider your capacity as a creator and what amount of work you can reliably sustain. Generally, it's a good growth strategy to commit to uploading a new video weekly at a consistent day and time, for example, every Tuesday at noon. You can even create a stockpile of content, upload the videos to YouTube (private or unlisted), and schedule them to go live in advance to maintain consistency. The YouTube algorithm will reward you for frequent activity on your channel, optimizing your reach.

Avoid uploading (publishing live) all of your videos on the same day. This might be tempting if you've created a series of videos all around one topic and have them ready in one chunk. This can be detrimental to your channel strategy, considering how people interact natively with videos on the platform. Most users (especially young people) visit YouTube every single day and scroll through their subscription feed. When you upload a block of videos, you inadvertently take over their newsfeed and interrupt their viewing experience, which often results in an unsubscribe from your channel. They are unlikely to sit and watch all your new videos at once, though they might binge a playlist later when they are in the mood and have time. When you space out your new videos, your content appears more regularly in your subscriber's newsfeeds, and this encourages repeat engagement.

Try not to miss an upload. Sometimes, our perfectionism can get in the way.

Remember: Done > Perfect. In the realm of social media, it is better to have an ongoing stream of mediocre content than a single piece of perfect content. People are overwhelmingly drawn to authenticity, not perfection. In some cases, overproduced videos that are too perfect are a turnoff for a social media audience that is looking for real-life advice and perspectives. Consistency matters more than quality. That doesn't mean you should be sloppy and allow typos. It just means to do your best, know when to call it done, and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit. Most people subscribe to a YouTube channel to be a part of that channel's community. But creating a community around a single piece of content every few months is very difficult. Commit to an upload schedule to make sure you grow a robust library of content, and hit upload without fail to foster that community engagement. Otherwise, your community will lose interest.

To help with this element of your content strategy, we highly recommend **blocking time for brainstorming, research, planning, batch shooting, and editing videos**. Reserve uninterrupted time in your schedule for pre-production, brainstorming, and planning. Then set aside one day a month to shoot at least four to six videos at once, streamlining your process. Shooting video takes a lot of energy. Be sure to block the time leading up to your shoot day for preparing mentally and physically to maintain good levels of energy. The reality is, what gets scheduled gets done. This is especially true if you're managing your YouTube channel on the side. Then go through and edit during your reserved editing block, and schedule them to be published at their designated times throughout the upcoming weeks. It takes a bit of pre-planning in terms of content and preparation, but it saves time and helps you stay ahead of the curve. This also allows you to turn your focus to other important audience growth techniques, such as engaging with comments during the rest of the month. Grant yourself rest from the creative process to help you be refreshed for the next shoot.

Tips to help you stay consistent

- Block time for brainstorming, research, planning, shooting, and editing videos.
- Batch shoot your videos.
- Go into your batch shoot with every video loosely outlined to help you stay on track. Having a framework with bullet points for your main topic sections helps you develop a consistent vlogging style without the videos feeling scripted.
- Keep going; it will get easier. Repetition will help you speed up your work flow, allowing you to produce content faster and easier, while staying on schedule.

Next Steps

- Research, brainstorm, and plan your videos for the next three to six months.
- Create an upload schedule for the next three to six months (topics and titles).
- Batch produce the first month's worth of content.
- Start hitting upload, and schedule your videos!

8. Thou shalt engage with comments.

Don't just talk at your audience; talk with them.

Engagement is key to building an online community with meaningful relationships that ultimately result in impact. One of the factors that the YouTube algorithm weighs is whether your video is creating engagements in the comment section. By responding to every comment, it helps your content perform better in the algorithm, improving your ranking in searches and helping you show up in suggested videos. Therefore, if someone takes the time to engage with your content, good or bad, take the time to respond and let them know they are valued.

Treat each comment as you would an in-person conversation. Interact with them, and try to understand where they are coming from. This includes when people ask questions, but also when they give praise or even offer criticism that isn't too constructive. Remember that on the other end of that comment is a real-life person. Ask God to give you wisdom on how best to respond to their comment.

This is a huge opportunity for ministry that must not be overlooked. Many people who comment on your ministry's videos may be battling challenges, struggling with faith, and asking very sincere questions. As representatives of the Church, we can be the voice that answers. We have a message of hope and wholeness that can help our audience realize that God is there for them.

As you consistently engage with people's real questions and comments, these have the potential to eventually turn into face-to-face opportunities for Bible workers and digital missionaries, utilizing tools like Facetime and Zoom to witness to people from all around the world. Responding to feedback is one of the most important aspects of a ministry. Seize every opportunity to reply to comments, engage in conversation, point people to resources, share scripture, and most importantly, point them to Jesus. Every opportunity to connect is an opportunity to advance the kingdom of God.

[Download a free guide](#) to help you navigate the sometimes-complicated waters of digital engagement and community care.

5 Comment Tips for Growing Your Channel

- **Pin Comments:** This allows you to curate what people see first when they scroll through video comments. We recommend posting and pinning a comment or question for your audience to respond to, along with helpful links or time codes of key moments in the video. You can also pin or highlight a favorite comment you received from a viewer. This helps create a positive vibe and shows appreciation to those who support your channel and videos.
- **Heart Comments:** Go through your comments, and heart every positive one. This lets the viewer know that you saw and appreciated their comment, even if you don't have

time to write back. A notification is actually sent to the person when you do this and is a great way to re-engage your audience, encouraging them to return to your videos. You can go back anytime to engage with past comments this way.

- **Reply to All Comments:** This is a great way to start a conversation. We recommend that you reply to everyone. You'll easily double your comments, which doubles your engagement, triggering the algorithm to send a message to YouTube that this is an engaging video that is relevant to audiences.
- **Add Time Codes in the Comments:** This trick works in both the description area and the comment area. Type out time codes (e.g., 0:53 or 3:42) for different points in a video, and these become clickable times that people can skip to in the video. This is particularly helpful for longer videos that cover several topics, helping to prevent people from getting frustrated and skipping the entire video when they can't quickly get the information they are searching for.
- **Thumbs Up/Down Comments:** "Like" every positive comment, and thumb down every negative comment. This helps curate the positive comments toward the top and re-engages your audience.

Next Step

Look back on existing videos, and respond to every comment in the last six months, create pinned comments, and set up time code links for longer videos.

9. Thou shalt always continue learning.

To be an effective digital missionary, it's essential to always continue learning and adapting.

Social media is one of the most rapidly changing industries out there. Successful content creators make a habit of staying on top of the most recent changes and adjusting their strategies accordingly. As digital missionaries, it's vital we stay on the cutting edge of these technologies.

The good news is, when it comes to social media, learning won't be an expensive endeavor. There's also no need to go back to school. A college setting is not the best way to learn the latest technologies and best practices for digital communications. From the time a change is made to the time best practices make it into a textbook, enough time has passed that it is no longer applicable to the student or professional seeking to implement these strategies in the real world. Besides, theory is different from practical implementation.

Because information goes out of date fast, we must take a nimble approach to our self-education for digital missions. Many find this overwhelming and consequently do not pay close attention to the changes taking place. If we prioritize our goals and do our homework, there's

much opportunity for growth in the digital space. We must also be flexible enough to pivot and adapt to optimize our reach and impact with the latest platform and algorithm changes. Adopting this mindset will bolster your ability to successfully get God's message out to the people you're trying to reach. Spend a few minutes each day watching videos, listening to a podcast, or going through an online course. These resources should be taught or created by someone actively engaged in implementing the principles they are teaching. This will help you stay on top of all the latest tips and recommendations.

One of the great things about the YouTube creative community is the willingness to share ideas and collaborate. Take time to connect with other creatives and build relationships. Those who succeed the most on the platform are those who build a network of like-minded creatives. Join online groups with other Christian creatives. You can help each other grow, ask questions, pray for each other, and help each other learn through this process of creating faith-based content.

Recommended Resources

- ProChurchTools.com
- THiNKmediaTV
- VideoInfluencers
- VideoCreatorsTV
- DerralEves
- NickNimmin
- RobertoBlake2

10. Thou shalt continually study thy analytics.

To have a successful video ministry, use analytics to make data-informed strategic decisions.

The most valuable tool for prioritizing and making decisions for future content is analytics. Analytics can be both a blessing and a curse. It can be very easy to get hung up on comments (both good and bad). However, viewer activity does not lie. Studying metrics like "average minutes watched per video" or "total comments per video" gives insight into what your audience finds engaging. Paying attention to your performance metrics can tell you who your audience is and what kind of content they respond to best. In other words, it can help you know what kind of content to produce that matches the needs and interests of the audience you are attracting. Following these trends can help you make data-driven decisions on how to shape your ministry and optimize for growth and impact.

The danger is that we forget the numbers represent real people who are growing spiritually. No matter what the numbers say, don't lose sight of your calling and original intention for starting a ministry. Don't let your ego get in the way if your numbers are high or low. You might feel that 100 views on your video is not a lot and get discouraged, but if 100 people showed up to your Bible study, you would probably be ecstatic. Others may lose sight of the individuals they

are reaching when they get too consumed in a growing number of subscribers or views. It's not about how many subscribers you have, but about how many people are following Jesus through your content. Analytics is a tool to help us optimize the reach of our messages, but ultimately, you don't need big numbers to generate meaningful impact in people's lives.

Some practical uses of analytics

- If you notice a big spike in views for the last 48 hours, you'd want to figure out why and how you can encourage similar behavior with future videos. Determine where in the world people are watching your videos and how they are finding your content. Sometimes, when you see a big spike in views, it's because a social media influencer or blog picked it up and shared your content. By monitoring your content closely, you can recognize and seize these opportunities to create relationships with these people who may continue to share your content. Reach out to them, thank them for sharing your content, and ask them if there's anything you can do to get featured again or help them. Ask them what kind of content they are looking for and what kind of things their readers/viewers really enjoy. Keeping an eye on your analytics helps you create better relationships and opportunities for partnerships.
- You may be creating content primarily for males but discover that you have a large female following. To respond to this information, you can involve a female coworker or spouse to give that portion of your audience someone to relate or look up to.
- Check out the top three websites embedding your content. This very helpful piece of information can help you find out where your content is being shared and talked about. This can also help you determine how people are finding your content. Especially if you have a website, you can see if your website is successfully transferring people to your YouTube channel.
- Review the top search phrases people are using in YouTube to find your content and subscribe to your channel. This helps you understand what your viewers were actually trying to find. You can then create content to meet their needs based on these searches to reinforce your relevance to your subscribers. This may require a shift in the content you're creating or a change in the mix of content you're creating. To help grow your channel, consider refocusing your brand and content around these top search phrases.

The three basic areas to go to for analytics are:

- **App (YouTube Studio)** – This feature is available on your desktop or smart phone for YouTube creators. Sign in using your channel login information to gain easy access to your channel's analytics, such as views, top-performing videos, demographics, and more.
- **VidIQ** – This is another free web-based tool that will allow you to study your analytics.
- **[TubeBuddy](#)** – This paid service allows you to sign up for notifications for certain search phrases, keeping you informed about conversations happening related to the topics you're covering. This will help with networking and building those online relationships for potential partnerships. This will also allow you to see what the conversation looks like concerning a particular topic and find ways to insert your content in a way that makes it

stand out, helping you to become one of the major players. You can also follow the growth of “competitors,” or other YouTube channels that are like yours in size and topical niche. This helps you understand your performance and build relationships with others. Use the competitor scorecard to track their growth when they upload, etc., so you can mimic and learn from them as well as see the trends of their videos. When they make changes such as shifting from produced videos to live videos, you can see how it impacts their growth and overall performance so you can evaluate if making a similar change would be in your best interest. This resource is a helpful source of ideas for experimentation and can help you make strategic decisions when adapting your content.

Next steps

- Download the YouTube “creator” app for your phone.
- Explore the analytics tab under “creator studio” on YouTube.
- Install [vidIQ](#) or [TubeBuddy](#).

More Resources

- [The Best Tool for YouTube Creators – TubeBuddy](#)
- [Top Tools and Apps for Growing a YouTube Audience](#)

Becoming Future Proof

While you can't become immune to the rapidly changing world of social media, your organization can implement strategies to stay ahead of the curve by recognizing new opportunities and being able to identify threats.

Start with consistently researching blogs and articles about new developments and updates on social media platforms. There is so much information for free on the Internet about marketing strategies and ways to optimize your social channels. All you have to do is look for it. By keeping an eye on innovations and trends, your team will learn to discern between passing fads and market disruptions. Follow blogs like [TechCrunch](#), [Moz](#), and [HubSpot](#). You can also take cheap or free courses on sites like [Lynda.com](#) or [skillshare.com](#).

This can take a lot of time, though, so another option is to contract this work out to somebody. Full-time employees in your ministry might not have the time to dive into each rabbit hole of social media trends, so hiring someone to do the deep diving and provide your organization with reports on what it needs to know (with practical steps) is a great option if time is limited.

We highly recommend that you also build a network of practitioners and experts. Talking with other people invested in the same field will give you lots of insights and new ideas to try. Begin by following successful social media influencers to see what they are doing, as well as Fortune 500 companies. Many of their "big-budget" campaigns and tricks can be adapted for ministry purposes—and small budgets.

Last, this is an opportunity for you to empower and involve younger members of the Church. This might be a little out of your comfort zone, but to stay relevant, we must let the youth lead. After all, they are in the best position to know how to reach their own demographic. Create space for them, and allow them to try new ideas. Create a culture of creativity and innovation that accepts failure as part of the learning process.

Self-Assessment Worksheet

Use the document below to define your video ministry's strategy.

“Thou shalt have a clearly defined target market.”

Stop trying to reach everyone! Make your goal to reach one person, and create a persona profile for that person. Below are some questions to really help you map the journey of the person you are trying to reach. What do they like to do? Do they have a family? Where did they grow up? Write it all out to really understand who you are trying to reach. Remember, it's all about empathy! The goal is that when people find your ministry, they'll feel like they found a channel specifically tailored to them. After a while, you will have created a community with similar backgrounds and interests who will self-select your content. In other words, to have a bigger influence, focus on one person.

Who are they?

Primary Segment

Demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, location, income, education) and psychographics (e.g., social identity, purchasing trends, leisure activities, and any other insights)

Secondary Segment

Your primary segment, but with a broader perspective. For example, if your primary segment is Adventist college students, your secondary segment would be all Christian college students.

Your Identity (Brand)

(What you're offering, and why people should care)

Ethos

(What you believe)

Mission

(How your beliefs manifest)

Vision

(The future, if your mission is accomplished)

Values

(The strategic context that guides the brand—these statements define how you do what you do to ensure the mission is fulfilled with integrity.)

Unique Value Proposition

(Single phrase that can be shared easily and distinguishes your brand from others.)

User Engagement

Increasing social media traffic happens when you are dedicated to engaging and building relationships on each network. Consistency and availability add a lot of credibility to your brand. As a ministry, look at the questions below, and, based on your mission, decide how you want to be demonstrate consistency to your followers.

What conversion (tangible action) is your campaign trying to get people to achieve?

(e.g., passive observer to active engager, attending church, baptism, etc.)

What will be your calls-to-action?

What are you asking your audience to do? With calls-to-action, it is important to invite people audibly (if your content is video) and visibly (share icons, graphics, and captions. Examples include asking them to like, share, or give their thoughts in the comments, sign up for a weekly newsletter, or sign up for a Bible study.

How will you follow up?

Follow-up is one of the biggest ways you can grow trust and can be done with many methods, e.g., responding to every comment and email, reaching out and offering to call them, praying with people, sending links, creating content around how people are reacting, inviting someone to a church, etc.)

PART 2: CASE STUDY, USING BEST PRACTICES



JUSTIN KHOE

life. faith. & the things that matter.



Introduction

written by Justin Khoe, edited by Jamie Domm and Georgia Damsteegt

Who is Justin Khoe?

Justin Khoe is a digital missionary. Known online primarily as “That Christian Vlogger,” Justin runs a Christian YouTube channel with over 100,000 subscribers (as of May 2020) that seeks to have a positive impact on those searching for spiritual answers online. His YouTube videos have been seen around the world by over two million people. With over ten years of preaching, literature evangelism, and teaching experience, Justin’s current focus is leveraging social media to help reach unchurched young adults. Co-hosting the channel is his wife, Emily. Justin and Emily aim to encourage young adults to have a stronger and deeper relationship with God and to help them discover who God has created them to be. They call this way of living “experiencing faith in the first person.” In 2018, Justin created an interactive Christian community and received 2,334 requests for Bible studies. He has since rebranded his channel as “I’m Listening with Justin Khoe; Life. Faith. And the things that matter.”

Defining success

First off, let’s talk about how to define success in ministry with YouTube. When I think about success, I ask myself, “What would a successful Bible study look like?” Digital ministry is just a way to reach farther than I can physically. If I went canvassing door-to-door for a day and got 12 people that want a Bible study, I’d feel blown away! So, it’s important to keep in mind that each view, like, and subscriber is a real person. If your videos make a difference in one person’s life, your ministry has been a vessel used to give glory to God.

That being said, before I started my channel, I was praying about what goal I should set to achieve after 12 months. I said, “After 12 months of having a YouTube channel, I hope to reach 250 people.” Then God said to me in prayer that I needed to set a goal that will test my faith. He told me I needed to set a goal that only He can accomplish. So, I set a new goal, hoping to reach 500 people in one year! By the end of 12 months, I had an audience of over 10,000 people!

About three years ago, I started “That Christian Vlogger” with zero experience, and now I have over 440 videos with an audience of over 100,000 subscribers. I have had over four million worldwide viewers in about three years. I never could have preached or given Bible studies to this many people, in-person, in this amount of time.

YouTube has two billion active users every single month. If YouTube was a country, it would be six times the size of the United States. YouTube reaches 100 different countries and is accessible in over 80 different languages. Through all of these active users, the average viewing session is about 40 minutes.

We now have more access than ever before, to people who are watching, consuming, and learning. Every single day, 30 million people sign in to YouTube. Five billion videos are viewed a day.

The truth is that YouTube reaches more Millennials than any broadcast or cable network to date. This is important for the Church to take note of because, according to a 2013 North American Division study of Adventist young people, 59% of Adventist Millennials left their Church by age 18. And for those Millennials still in the Church, it showed that 23% were on the fence about if they would stay.

Let's zoom out a bit. Only **20% of Americans regularly attend church**, and only **two in 10 Millennials consider regular church attendance important**. These facts are not included just to depress you, because when I look at the demographics of my viewers, I see that 77% of my audience is under the age of 34. The very same demographic leaving the Church is the one tuning in.

When it comes to reaching Millennials, social media is a *necessity*, not a luxury. To meet them where they are, we must go online. Millennials spend, on average, **18-plus hours per day** behind a screen consuming movies, podcasts, and social media, as well as playing video games. If you think that's crazy, consider this: When I shared this statistic at Andrews University, more than 50% of the seminarians I asked said that this was an accurate representation of their day.

As a Church, our first response has been to point out the inherent dangers in online media, and rightfully so. However, if we have any desire to reach the unchurched or those who have left the faith, running away from social media is no longer an option. As Eleanor Roosevelt famously said, "It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Rather than running away from social media, I believe God is calling us to run toward it, not as mindless consumers and gullible sheep, but as digital missionaries.

The digital missionary recognizes "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13, NIV). But as Paul said, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14–15, ESV). The digital missionary is a faithful Christian committed to taking the gospel to the world, whether that means selling books door-to-door, hopping on a plane to a

developing country, sharing their testimony on Sabbath afternoon, or creating videos on YouTube.

Fighting my own discouragement has been the biggest challenge I have faced. It's easy to feel like you're making no difference. Digital evangelism is a long game. It is much easier to feel like you're making a difference when people physically come to a building to hear a message. My "viewers" can feel very faceless at times. The way I combat this discouragement is by making the decision to stay consistent and reminding myself that real people are being affected. I pray these lessons learned can help you with your ministry and encourage you to keep going, even when you don't yet see the fruit of your labor.

Five of the Most Important Tips Learned in Four Years as a Digital Missionary

written by Justin Khoe, edited by Jamie Domm and Georgia Damsteegt

Tip 1: Assume no one will ever come to your church.

When most begin thinking about digital evangelism, one of the first questions is, “How do we get them to come to church?” Respectfully, I think this is the wrong question to ask. After all, the mission given to us by Jesus was to make disciples, not grow our local church. Stop treating Facebook or Instagram simply as advertising platforms for weekend services or midweek socials. Instead, ask yourself this: If the only teaching or discipling that my viewer receives comes from my online ministry, how would their walk with God look? Would their love for Jesus be increased? Would they be challenged? Would their faith grow? By taking the “disinterested benevolence” approach, always serving and never expecting, God will place us directly in the path of those who need it most. Sometimes, that means our ministry will reach the shut-ins and disabled, the persecuted Christian living in a Muslim country (true story), or someone like Brook.

Hi Justin! I'm eighteen years old and I have lived in Florida my whole life. My family has always titled ourselves Christians, yet I've felt that for years I haven't had a real relationship with Jesus. About two months ago I found a bible while cleaning out my closet and started to read it! I then decided I wanted a relationship with Jesus. My family doesn't go to church and I don't drive, so I began researching for an online ministry. I tried multiple different ministries before coming across yours. I would like to thank you and your wife for teaching me so much and guiding me through this part of my life. I'm so grateful for your channel! -Brook

Paradoxically, by making this assumption, people do show up at church. In fact, this past month, Helen dragged her husband *and* all four of her kids to church when she found out I would be speaking at a local Adventist church only two-and-a-half hours away. She may not be baptized yet, but as someone who has been convinced of the seventh-day Sabbath, Helen is doing the hard work of wrestling with difficult questions. Thankfully, she doesn't have to do this on her own.



Helen and her family.



Helen with Justin Khoe.

Tip 2: Numbers matter, but not in the way that you think.

As a digital missionary, it's easy to believe two lies when it comes to "numbers." On the one hand, it's easy to get proud when a video goes viral and the subscribers start rolling in. Conversely, it's easy to get discouraged and think it's not worth the effort when only a dozen people watch a video that took you five or six hours to create. In the same way that God values the small local church of a dozen members and the mega church with tens or hundreds of thousands of members *equally*, the same is true for the online video. It doesn't matter if your video gets millions of views or dozens; God values it the same. After all, what matters to God most is the impact on the individual. It can be so easy to forget this simple fact, leading us to start interpreting views as a simple metric instead of what it really represents: actual real, live human beings who have taken the time to watch your content.

No Bible worker would for a moment feel ashamed when only a dozen people showed up to their Bible study. No pastor would ever consider the many hours in sermon prep a waste, even if he only got to preach to 50 or 100 people. The same should be true for digital missionaries. Why? Because each view isn't actually a view. It's a person.

How to Glorify God | 5 Ways to Glorify the Lord



I'm about to subscribe and I just wanted to remind you, I'm a real person just like you and this video has influenced my life the right way. I'm about to start a HUGE creative journey and I'm very glad to say God just used you to point me the right way. That's the highest honour man, you're an obedient guy man! Thank you for letting His light shine through you.

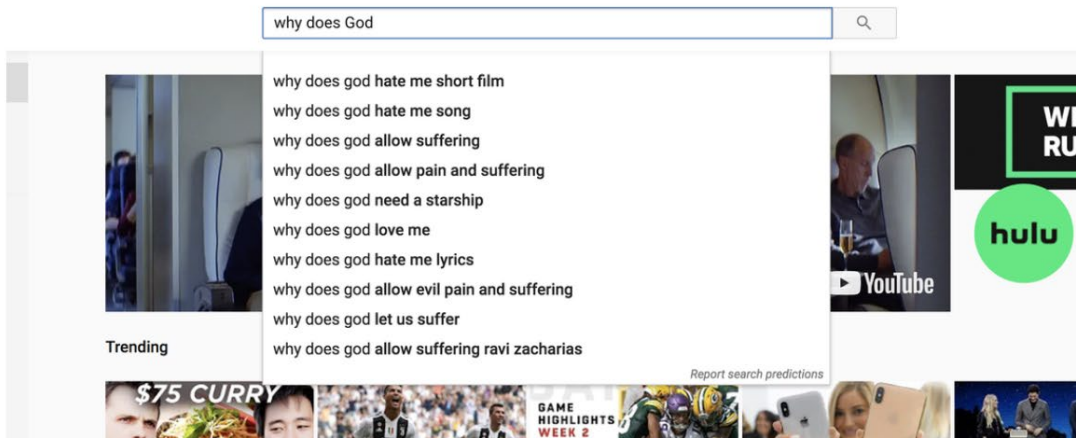
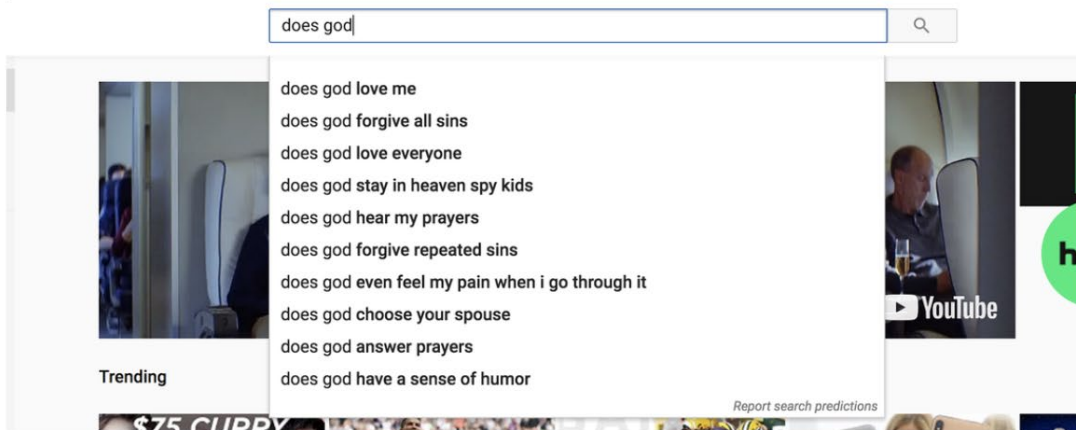
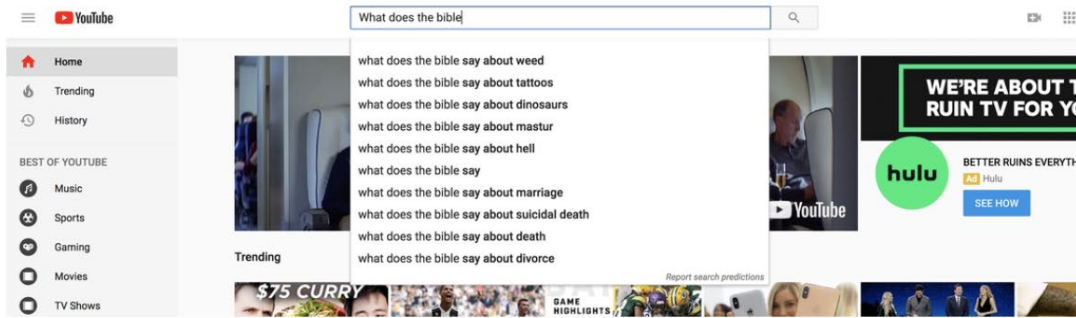
Olumedia • 5 hours ago



Tip 3: Teach what your viewers are looking for, not what you're interested in.

One of the most overlooked facts about YouTube is that it is the second-largest search engine in the world. In fact, every month, YouTube sees over three billion searches! "How-to" videos are increasing in quantity by 70% each year. We know this intuitively, as well as statistically. After all, what do we do when we need to learn how to change a tire? We YouTube it! Need to learn how to tie a tie? YouTube it! Trying to learn how to install a piece of software on our computer ... YouTube it! The same is true for spiritual questions. Over 100,000 people every single month are searching for answers to questions like, "Is God real," "What happens after death," "What is faith," and even ... "What is a Seventh-day Adventist?"

Instead of uploading an hour-long debate on who the King of the North is from Daniel 11, try targeting what people are actively searching for. Here's a pro tip on how to discover what people are looking for online. Open YouTube on an "incognito tab" on Chrome (if you don't know how to do this, ask a 13-year-old in your church). By doing this, you won't allow your personal search history to influence the auto-complete in the search bar. Start typing phrases like, "What does the Bible ..." "Does God ..." and "Why does God ..."



Pay close attention to what shows up. YouTube is telling you that these are the most-typed questions by YouTube viewers from across the world! This is where you should start when creating online content.

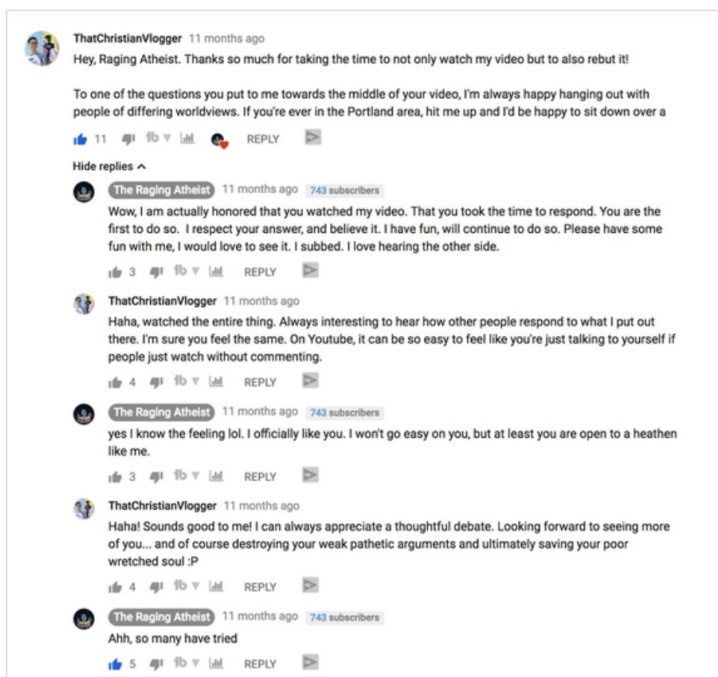
P.S. Use free tools like VID IQ, Google Ads, or Tube Buddy to get more in-depth information on specific questions many people are searching for. This was discussed in depth in the previous section of this guide.

Tip 4: Remember, community matters most!

Most of your viewers will be casual viewers: those who watch one or two videos, only to wander to some other part of the internet. Don't be discouraged by this. Jesus mentioned that there would be different soils each time we try to plant seed. Don't be easily discouraged when it seems like your audience is highly transient in nature. If you are consistent in creating quality content, never "grow weary of doing good." The promise is that, "in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9, ESV).

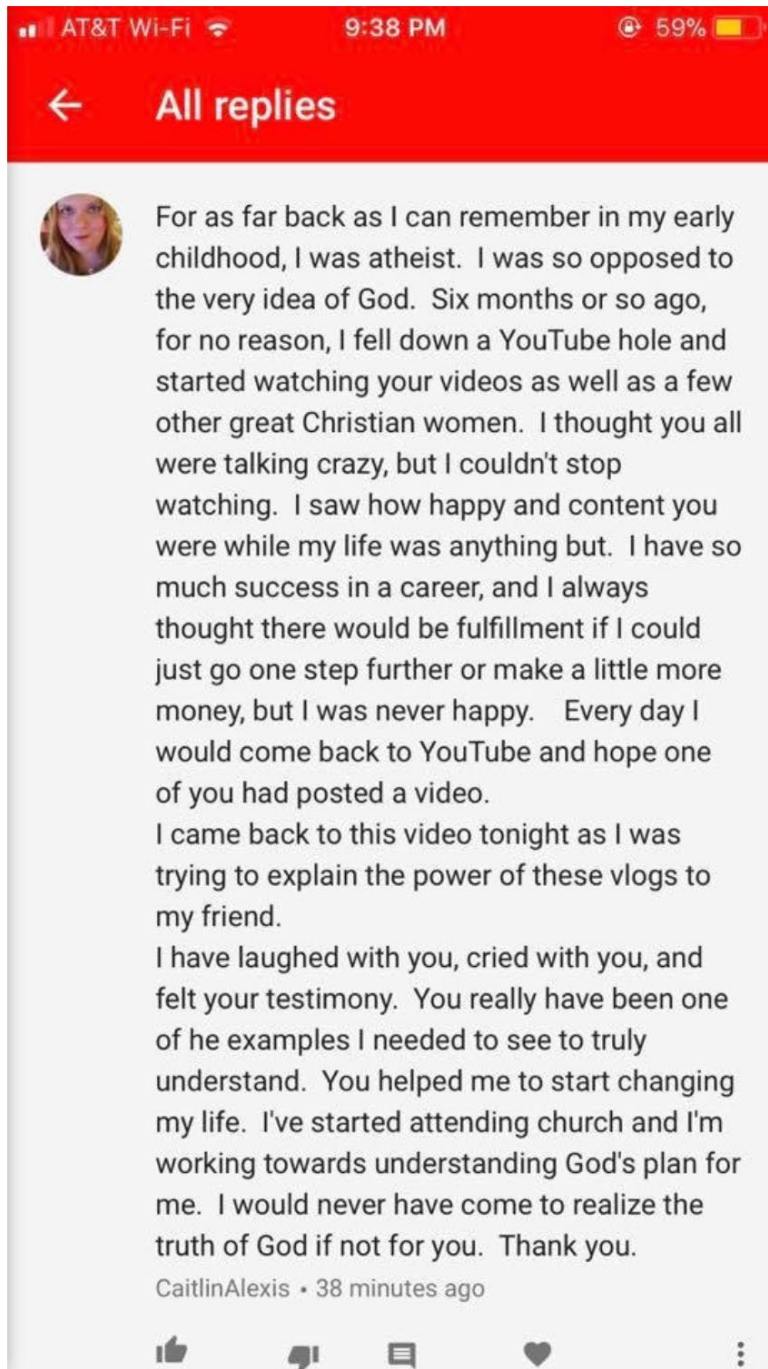
Building deep community takes time. This is true of digital missions and IRL (in-real-life) ministry. People may visit your church dozens of times before they truly engage with the community and get involved through service. When I started my online ministry, I asked myself how I would define "success" if I were planting a church. After 12 months, would an engaged community of 50 people be success? A hundred? A thousand? Apply this same long-term mentality to building an online community. Don't get impatient.

Other than creating consistent, quality content, there are many more ways to build community. Respond to every single comment. Yes, all of them. Every comment is an opportunity to build community. Think of every comment as a real interaction (because that's what it is). How would you respond if someone had something complimentary or critical to say to you after church? What would you do when a visitor had a question to ask the pastoral team? Respond to *every single comment*. Even the haters. Some of the most meaningful interactions that I have had online actually came from people who were initially haters. When fellow YouTuber "The Raging Atheist" made a very colorfully worded and angry video focused on attacking my channel (<http://bit.ly/2NVbTrU> —sensitive ears beware), instead of getting defensive, I tried to reach out.



Two more VERY colorful videos and several months later, “The Raging Atheist” not only considers me a friend but also actively encourages his atheist subscribers to subscribe to my channel. To hear the full story, check out the [Restore podcast](#) by Javier Diaz.

Make it a practice to reach out to your viewers. Connect with them on other social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Ask them questions. Offer to video chat or call them when they have questions. Respond to every email as if they were a person knocking on your church door, and over time, you will build a deep and meaningful community.



Tip 5: Prayer is not enough. Educate yourself and collaborate with others.

Don't get me wrong. Prayer is not only important; it is necessary. Any success that we will have in ministry, digital or otherwise, comes as a direct response to prayer. But a digital missionary must combine it with an active effort to be informed and competent. Social media platforms change about as often as Apple releases new iPhones. As such, it's important to continually invest in education and mentorship.

I'm writing this case study having just gotten back from Las Vegas. No, I wasn't trying to make it big at the casinos. Instead, I had just invested three days with some of the industry's leading experts on social media marketing.



Justin with his mentors.

Side note: Many of the most proficient experts in social media are fellow believers, seizing the power of social media for kingdom growth!

Over the last three years, I have spent over \$10,000 on online courses, coaching, books, conferences, and mentorship. Now, I realize that not everyone is in the position to invest this type of money, but there are so many free resources available to help equip you with the knowledge and tools you need to succeed as a digital missionary. (Thanks to the North American Division for partnering with me to create a [FREE course on how to start a video ministry.](#))

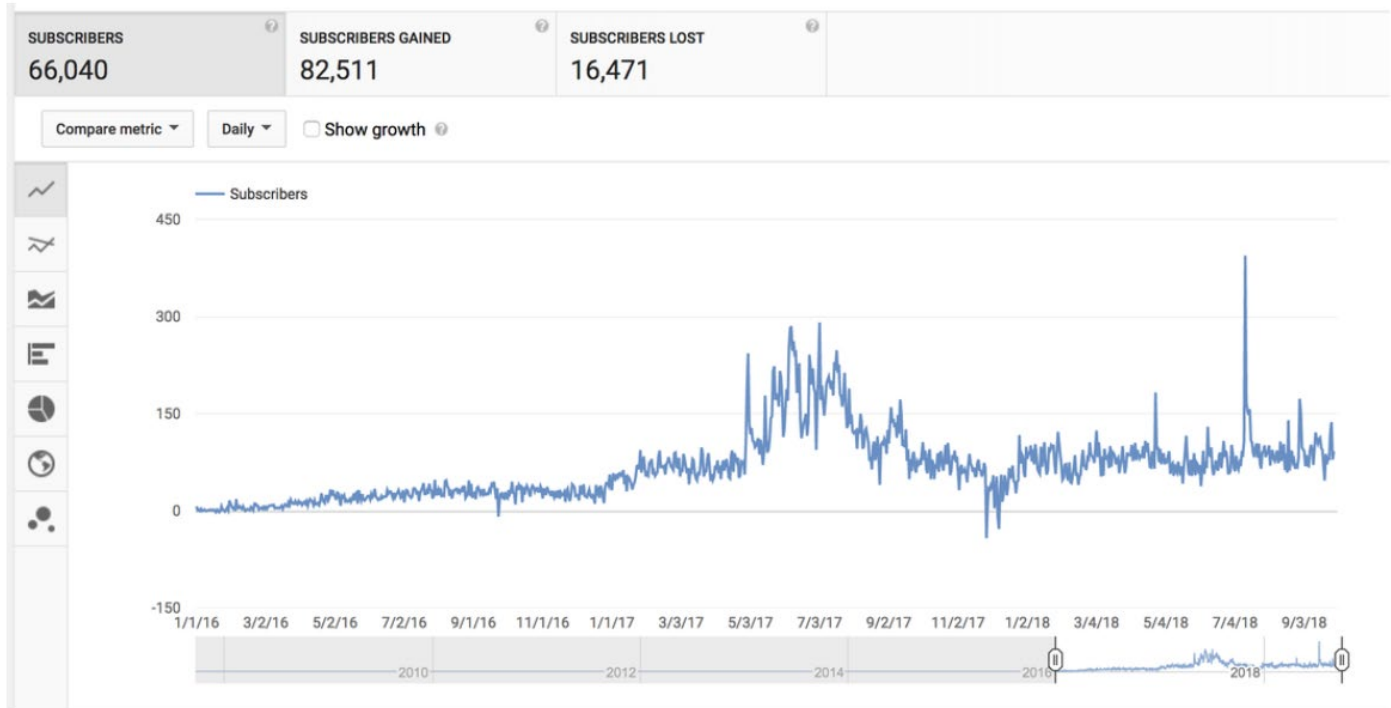
Perhaps one of the most beautiful things about digital missions is that social media actually rewards collaboration instead of competition. Whether you are looking to launch a YouTube channel, podcast, blog, or Instagram account, there is much to be gained from partnering with like-minded and mission-minded people. Connect with other digital missionaries. Learn from their experiences, both the successes and failures. Seek to bolster and support their efforts with the heart of a servant.

P.S., if you're still doubtful that digital mission work really makes a difference, this is Michael Troyonasky. He became a Seventh-Day Adventist because of a YouTube video. Yes, it makes a difference.



How “That Christian Vlogger” Grew His Channel from 0 to 65,000 Followers

written by Justin Khoe, edited by Jamie Domm



That Christian Vlogger YouTube Growth Chart

Let’s assume that you’re convinced about digital missions. In fact, let’s say that you’re ready to start a YouTube channel for your ministry, church, or as an individual! The question is, how do you grow an audience? Great content needs to be *seen* to impact the lives of your intended audience. Let me walk you through five key steps.

Step #1 – Commit to an upload schedule.

Perhaps the most important thing to realize is that growing an audience takes time. Over the last four years, I have created over 400 videos. Some of those videos have been seen by tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of viewers, while some have fallen flat with just a few hundred.

The main reason you want to commit to an upload schedule is because you learn so much more when you create so much more. Many people expect to release one perfect video and create an audience from that one video. Now, while I do not doubt the power of a viral video, you can never really create a deep and meaningful community with one video.

When I first started my YouTube channel, I promised myself that I would upload one video per week without fail (it turns out that I *actually* uploaded 100 videos that year). **I am a firm believer that *done* is better than *perfect*.** So many people get paralysis by analysis simply because they want to create the perfect piece of content.

News flash: Your first videos will suck. That's ok. Everyone's first videos are terrible. The point isn't that you create perfect content, but that you perfect the art of creating *better* content. With each video, you should improve on the one before.

For the purposes of YouTube, I suggest a minimum of one upload per week. If you have the additional bandwidth and skills to do more, that's great, but not necessary. One video per week will suffice.

Step #2 – Do your homework.

Now that you have committed to creating 52 videos in this upcoming year, the next question you should ask yourself is, what kind of content should you create? This is a key question for your ministry, and we go in-depth on this topic in previous sections of this guide.

The summary version is this: Find questions that people are searching for on the internet, and create content specifically designed to answer those questions. Utilize tools like VidIQ or Google keywords and the YouTube search engine to know what popular questions people are asking.

Ideally, you want to find the sweet spot between super-competitive searches and questions that no one is asking. If you target phrases that are too competitive, your voice will be crowded out, and your videos will fall short. Conversely, if you target niche questions with nearly zero search traffic, you may eliminate your potential viewers while eliminating potential competition.

To start, I suggest targeting questions or phrases that have on average 10,000–100,000 monthly searches on Google. Any more than 100,000 monthly views, and competition is too fierce. Any less than 10,000, and you're very likely not to garner attention at all.

One helpful exercise that I did when I first started was a broad search on YouTube of some of the most watched videos in the Christian niche. I created a spreadsheet of what people seemed to respond to most.

Youtube	Total Views
How to Study the Bible	306,000
What Happens When you Die	1,540,000
Where is God in Suffering	719,000
What does the Bible say about women?	683,000
What does the Bible say about tattoos?	10,400
What does the Bible say about homosexuality?	98,000
What does the Bible say about suicide	27,100
What does the Bible say about tithing	105,000
What does the Bible say about baptism	42,000
What does the Bible say about drinking	27,000
What does the Bible say about gambling	1,770
What does the Bible say about Halloween	20,400
What does the Bible say about aliens	97,600
What does the Bible say about hell	183,000
What does the Bible say about the rapture	94,800
What does the Bible say about weed	17,400
What does the Bible say about sex	131,000
What does the Bible say about divorce	24,000
What does the Bible say about abortion	34,700
What does the Bible say about dating	106,000
What day is the sabbath?	177,000
how can I trust the bible?	384,000
What does the Bible say about heaven?	184,000
Fun Facts about the Bible	67,400
Fun Facts about religion	58,800
Fun Facts about God	241,000
Bible prophecy	1,200,000
What is the trinity	410,000
How Can I be saved?	1,940,000
What does the Bible say about the last days	85,300
What does the Bible say about love	1,370,000
What does the Bible say about bible prophecy	651,000

Step #3 – Study analytics.

Once you have created an initial library of content (say, a dozen or so videos), it's time to start studying your numbers and learning from your analytics. You can learn quite a bit of information from the numbers that YouTube provides.

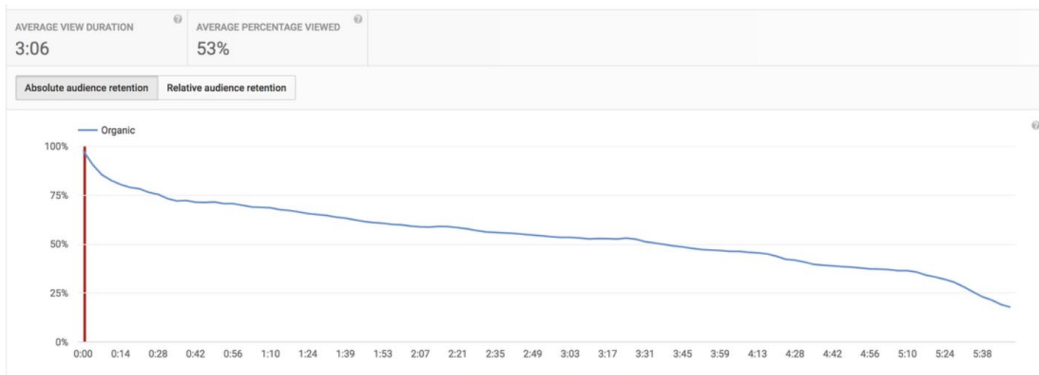
Pro tip: Some important metrics to take notice of are total views, minutes watched, and viewer retention.

The first two are pretty straightforward. Total number of views and minutes watched per video are obvious indications of what type of content is resonating with your growing audience. If you notice clear trends regarding which type of content is getting attention, dive deeper into that subject, and create more content around it.

For example, if your video on “How to Study the Bible” has noticeably higher engagement over any other type of content, consider creating content around a related topic. Examples could include, “Which Bible Translation Is Best?” “Where Should I Start When Studying the Bible?” and “Five Bible Verses to Help with Stress.” **The goal for creating families of content is to allow a potential viewer to binge watch three to four videos at a time.** If you only have one video on an important subject, they can't do this.

Viewer retention is arguably the most overlooked metric for most YouTube content creators. The longer you can keep someone on YouTube, the more favorably the YouTube algorithm will treat you. The simple fact of the matter is that not everyone watches the entirety of your video.

Consider the “Average percentage viewed” metric. A healthy benchmark to shoot for is above 50 percent.

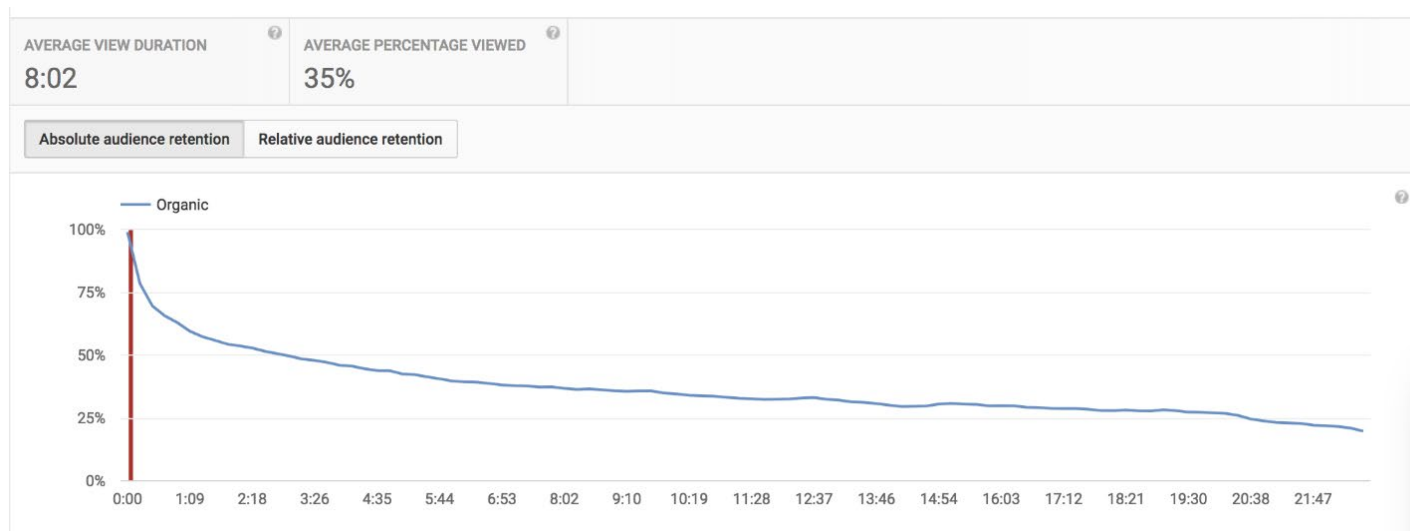


Healthy Viewer Retention

You'll notice in the picture that at no point are there significant drops in viewer retention. This is a healthy sign that the video you created was valuable to your audience and has done a reasonable job in addressing the question.

If you ever see sharp declines in audience retention, this is a great time for you to pull a lesson from it.

Consider this picture:



Unhealthy View Retention

You can see a sharp drop from 100 percent to about 60 percent retention within the first 60 seconds of this video. Perhaps my audience was not interested in the subject, maybe I did a poor job of introducing the content in an engaging way, or, most likely, I took too long to get to the content. Studying your viewer retention can help you change your approach and delivery of your content.

Step #4 – Engage in community.

It is crucial that you do not look at your YouTube channel as a one-way street. Too often, we view the YouTube platform as a digital portfolio of our content. This is a misguided approach that will limit your potential for meaningful impact. You should regularly be asking your audience questions, encouraging them to share their thoughts in the comments, and intentionally trying to build relationships that extend off the platform.

A rule of thumb: Every single piece of content that you create should invite conversation. The most obvious application of this is to ask your audience a question in each video. Encourage them to share what stood out to them, challenge what you presented, share if they agree or disagree with you, and to let you know why. Appropriate discourse and debate are hallmarks of a healthy online community.

Trolls: Create enough content, and you will inevitably encounter trolls. Internet trolls are people who start quarrels or aim to upset people on the internet with the exact purpose of distracting and sowing discord by posting inflammatory and digressive, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community. The goal for the troll is to amuse themselves by leading the community down rabbit holes and provoking viewers to display emotional responses.

There are a few ways you can handle internet trolls. All have merits and drawbacks.

1. **Ignore:** Don't engage or acknowledge the existence of trolls. Allow them to post, but don't feed their desire for attention. Hope that they leave. This allows the free exchange of ideas and thoughts but can at times distract from your message.
2. **Ban:** YouTube gives you the ability to delete comments on your channel and to ban specific users from posting comments in the future. This protects your online conversation but can unfortunately also alienate the very people that God has called you to reach out to.
3. **Flame:** Fight fire with fire. If your commenters are sarcastic, quippy, and obnoxious, return in kind. In certain online communities, this can be a win. You show yourself to be someone who doesn't take themselves too seriously, which can be more relatable to an online community. However, it is a challenge to balance how much is the right amount of attention to give a troll, and, of course, how to do so in an appropriately Christian way.
4. **Engage:** Respond to each comment as if they were genuinely sincere, even if they are obviously not. Seek to go beyond the call of duty by treating each troll with grace and humility. Be willing to put your own reputation to the side for the sake of reaching that person. This approach can reveal opportunities to reach people on a deeper level but requires the most time. Sitting down for 30-plus minutes crafting the perfect response to a troll is manageable if it only happens every so often, but if your community grows larger, this is unsustainable.

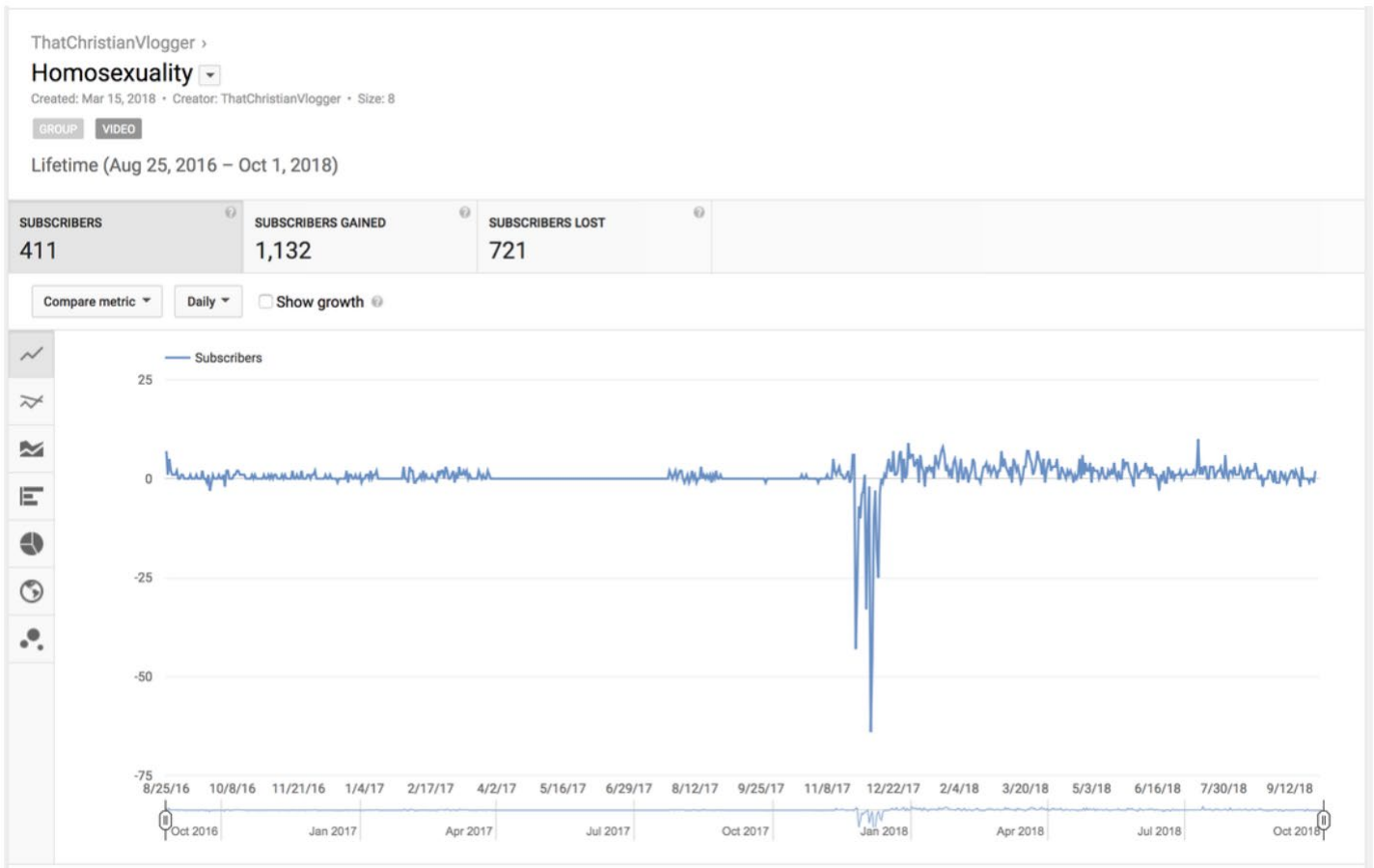
For more guidance on assessing your response, [download a helpful infographic.](#)

Step #5 – Take risks.

I am a firm believer that you should constantly be reinventing yourself. There is a major difference between 10 years of experience and one year of experience repeated 10 times. Experiment with different styles of content, approaches, and even subjects that challenge both you and the audience.

A topic I continually take the risk to discussing in my videos is the issue of the LGBT community. I have done eight total videos about homosexuality in relation to the Church. Each time, I have invited an openly gay Christian friend as a guest to the channel. The videos were not centered on debate, but empathy. My hope was to humanize the “other side” so we could talk to each other instead of past each other.

As you can imagine, there was a significant cost to this series. In total, I have lost over 700 hard-earned subscribers from this series of videos. If you look on the graph below, you can clearly see when these videos were initially released.



However, while I lost a considerable number of subscribers in the short term, I still believe that this was a healthy choice overall. The type of channel that I'm creating is one where controversial topics can be discussed. I, personally, am hoping to create a space where people can wrestle with their faith and ask the difficult questions that organized religion often avoids.

My audience may not always end up agreeing with my stance on any number of topics, but they know that I will always treat the subject and my guests with grace, compassion, and love. This posture of humility and an open heart invites a very particular type of viewer and has created a heavily engaged community willing to journey through life with me.

Why Is the Mormon Church Sponsoring an Adventist Digital Missionary?

written by Jamie Domm & Justin Khoe

Recently, advertisements sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints began running on prominent YouTuber Justin Khoe's videos. What makes this surprising is that Justin is a digital missionary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For every advertisement that runs on his videos, Justin gets a percentage of the revenue. In other words, when the Church of Jesus Christ targets their ads to subscribers of his channel, they are financially supporting his ministry, an Adventist ministry. Before we get into why this strategy makes sense and what it means for Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic methods, let us share some background information.

How YouTube Advertising Works

Advertising on YouTube is simple and straightforward: Pay Google a set amount (\$0.20 per view, on average) to insert a commercial to play before a video. The revenue from this advertising is split between Google and the content creator.

With over two billion people watching videos on YouTube each month, it's easy to see why advertising on the platform is attractive for businesses looking to reach a wide audience. And they are coming in droves; in 2019 alone, advertisers [spent an astonishing \\$5.47 billion dollars](#) on YouTube advertising.

It makes sense. Armed with an endless supply of targeted data from Google's immense user base, companies can now target prospective customers with pin-point accuracy. Travel agencies can target young families with an interest in exploring Southeast Asia. Makeup companies can target 13- to 17-year-old girls from the United Kingdom who have recently searched for specific brands of lipstick. The examples could go on and on.

Opportunities Beyond Profits

But YouTube advertising isn't the exclusive domain of makeup companies and travel agencies looking to turn a profit. For many organizations with non-financial motivations, YouTube has become an ideal platform for influencing targeted groups of people. Using Google's powerful targeting tools, politicians use the platform to target key voter segments, nonprofits use it to target likely donors, and—most recently—churches and other religious organizations have begun using it to target people interested in spirituality and searching for answers to spiritual questions.

This last scenario should be of particular interest to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As mentioned above, a religious organization has recently begun running ads on Justin Khoe's (a.k.a. "ThatChristianVlogger") YouTube channel. One ad in particular describes the conversion experience of Richard, an Asian-American atheist who became a Christian.

The approximately three-minute video describes how Richard was unhappy with his life and how he began to search for a greater purpose. Richard ultimately found not only a faith that could fill his need for purpose and meaning, but also one that appealed to his need for logic as a scientist. Eventually, Richard met with some missionaries and decided to join a church that loves and welcomes him with open arms.

A Neglected Field

The crazy part of this story lies in the organization sponsoring these ads on a Seventh-day Adventist YouTube channel: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The Church of Jesus Christ, known for their evangelistic zeal, have recognized—better than most denominations—that when young people have questions about purpose and identity, they don't turn to pastors and teachers as they did in previous decades. No, they turn instead to social media—Google, Facebook, YouTube, and the like.

In fact, [Generation Z can't live without YouTube](#), with 95% of them using the platform and half stating they can't live without it. [Gen Z prefers to watch, rather than read](#).

They view digital video and short-form clips almost six times as much as they read traditional digital publishers/blogs. Social influencers play a significant role in defining what youth audiences like, view, and buy. ... This is particularly true when marketing to Gen Z, who grew up with the internet and are not only demanding that all brands

entertain them, but also that entertainment shifts to behave like a friend—it's also why influencers are so effective in selling to this generation.

—Maude Standish, Vice President of Programming Strategy, *Fullscreen*

Rather than ignoring this trend, or attempting to counteract it, the Church of Jesus Christ has made the evangelistic leap that all churches seeking to remain relevant in the 21st century will have to take: They became *digital missionaries*. They found an existing online community of spiritually interested individuals (built by Justin Khoe through his YouTube channel), and then paid Google to spread their message to that targeted audience through advertising.

Consequently, a Seventh-day Adventist digital missionary—Justin Khoe—finds himself in the ironic position of being sponsored (via YouTube advertising) by the Church of Jesus Christ, because they recognize the immense evangelistic value of the audience he is building and the need to target the next generation on the digital platforms where they are searching for answers.

Next Steps

Supporting digital missions can take a variety of forms. For the individual, this may mean leveraging your own digital influence for the gospel or supporting your favorite Adventist influencer financially. Encourage friends and family members who feel called to the digital mission field, especially when they are frustrated and have doubts. If you don't understand what they are trying to do, ask questions, and never dismiss their ideas due to their "youth." In my experience, most principles gleaned from the physical mission field have application in the digital one. If you have evangelism and discipleship experience, be a guide and a mentor that encourages young people's ideas. You may not be a content creator, but if you're on social media, you can share their content to help expand their reach.

This will take a cultural shift at every level of our Church to recognize, encourage, support, and assist our youth, who are the best suited to reach their own generation. We must recognize digital missionaries as legitimate missionaries. This means not only making room for digital evangelism and discipleship in our churches, but preparing our youth for this mission field by equipping them with the right technical skills. We, as a denomination, must value the tech-savvy and social influencers if we are to accomplish our Great Commission in a digitally focused society. It's time to invest heavily in digital missionaries, platforms, technologies, and advertising strategies at the corporate and local levels of our Church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began as a grassroots effort that became a global movement. The explosion of digital technologies is affording us the opportunity to once again unite in a common purpose to expand the gospel. We are more connected than ever before, and the mission field is huge. I believe the next great awakening will be a digital one. I am challenging us to another grassroots movement of skilled individuals using their different talents (blogging, video, design, podcasting, IT, preaching, writing, healing, etc.) to share one message. I know there are thousands of faithful believers with the skills, expertise, and faith necessary to take our message online *en masse*. There is a place for everyone in this movement, but it will take everyone working together. The wisdom of traditional evangelism combined with the technical fluency of the youth could preach the three angels' messages with a loud voice to the ends of the earth. This is possible if we seize this opportunity before it's too late.