



June 14, 2012

Tips and Techniques for Mission Field Videos

In order to bolster the CBMA website, but more importantly to provide brethren with a greater understanding of life in the Mission Fields, the CBMA would like to begin to employ short and informal videos. As technological capabilities grow with the shrinking size of electronic devices, there is less of a need to drag heavy and expensive camera equipment into the Mission Fields for most purposes. This, coupled with the proliferation of “YouTube-style” videos on the Internet, allows what used to require a high-end video camera, sound equipment, and lighting to be accomplished with a single smartphone or digital camera.

As you travel throughout the Mission Fields, the CBMA asks that you spend a few minutes recording some of what you enjoy, so it can be shared with the brotherhood worldwide. If a picture tells a thousand words, think how much more thirty pictures per second—plus sound—would convey! Short videos showing ecclesial life and preaching efforts and results can only help to bolster the enthusiasm of brethren back home and encourage others to participate in the spreading of God’s Word across this Earth.

To that end, the CBMA has compiled a list of tips and techniques you might consider while shooting footage. Our goal is to build a library of three to five minute videos, and while you may film much more than that, we are happy to perform the editing and post-production. We simply need your raw footage.

Subject Matter

Over the years, the CBMA has used pictures and words to tell the story of the Mission Fields. As we transition to include video, much of the subject matter will remain the same, but this new medium affords us the opportunity to show the brethren so much more. Following are some of the recommended types of videos we would like to have.

Personal Interviews

How did you come into the truth? Such an important question for us all, but it is even more poignant to hear the answer from someone in the Mission Field. Look for a brother or sister that is comfortable sharing his story on camera. Not everyone will be comfortable in front of the camera, of course, but you can often find one or two in each ecclesia.

Questions you might ask the brother or sister:

- How did you first come in contact with the Truth?
- When did this happen?
- Who was your first teacher, and how did that work?

Ecclesial functions

Video allows us to see firsthand the different ecclesial cultures. Try to film Sunday School presentations, hymn sings, fraternal gatherings, or even potlucks. Walking through the crowd after meeting with the camera recording is another way to share what life is like in that ecclesia—the faces, conversations, and even the background noise tell much of the story.

Preaching Activities

Footage of ecclesial members in the Mission Fields working to spread the Truth in their region is another great story to tell. Perhaps the ecclesia is holding a seminar, or public lecture, or perhaps they are offering pamphlets to the public. All of these make for great footage, and a short clip or two can be used to document the work that local brethren perform.

Surroundings

Ecclesias in the Mission Fields are located in some of the most beautiful areas of God's creation. Take time to film the natural beauty that our Father has so lovingly given us. Look also for cultural shots—people, history, events—clips that tell the story of what it is like to live in this particular region of the world.

Group Photos

Yes, we are asking for help in creating videos, but good old fashioned pictures are still very important to us. If you could take a moment to gather the ecclesia together after meeting and take a group picture in front of the hall or with everyone still in their seats, it would help us tremendously.

Interview Techniques

In relation to video clips of personal, or one-on-one interviews, we offer the following suggestions.

Keep the Questions a Secret

When asked to do an interview, people will often ask for a list of the interview questions in advance. If at all possible, avoid giving them a list. You should certainly give people an idea of what the interview will be about, but if you can keep things in vague terms, you're much more likely to get spontaneous and fresh answers. Otherwise, the interview might look rehearsed.

Start With the Easy Ones

While you may be tempted to ask one, over-riding question, “How did you come into the truth?” you might refrain from doing so at first. A large, open-ended question like that can make your subject uneasy and feel like he has to talk for the whole interview. He might feel overwhelmed. Rather, start with some light-hearted, easy questions, like, “How long have you been living here? Did you grow up in the Sunday School or did someone bring you in? Who taught you the truth?” These simpler, short-answer questions will put your subject at ease and allow you to direct the interview yourself.

Don't Demand Perfection

We may think that anything that is going to be published has to be perfect. Video blogs are actually quite the opposite. We prefer to have videos that are indeed natural, complete with “ums” and “ahs” – these little breaks and pauses make the video much more authentic. There may be cultural barriers at play as well and your subject may not be comfortable in front of the camera at all. Just let things happen naturally, and let his personality speak for himself.

Don't Stop Recording

Once you've finished your interview, say, “Thank you, we're done now,” but don't turn the camera off just yet. Let the conversation continue informally as it often will. With all of the pressure off of your subject you might find that he speaks much more freely. This can lead to some of your best material.

Technical Tips

Don't look at the camera

Looking directly at the camera makes for a “floating head” type of shot and can result in an awkward video. It's much better for the viewer to be a “fly on the wall” and watch the proceedings as though he is invisible. This applies to all types of shots.

Rule of thirds

A time-tested technique in photography that goes back even to paintings is the rule of thirds. The idea is to divide the frame into thirds, both horizontally and vertically. You typically do not want to center the subject dead center in the middle of the frame, but usually on one of the “thirds” lines. For a portrait shot, you might place the subjects eyes on the upper third line; while for a nature shot, the tree might be best shifted to the left a little, centered on the left-side third line.

Get as Close as Possible

The close you can get to the subject, the better the shot. Close proximity provides you with better sound and allows you to fill the frame (or two thirds of the frame) with the subject. It's much better to stand physically closer to the subject than it is to use the camera's zoom feature since most consumer based cameras and smartphones apply a digital zoom (as opposed to an optical zoom) that results less pixels per shot.

Fix the Camera

Try to place camera on a tripod or monopod, or even set it on a table or rock. If you must hold the camera in your hands, try to brace yourself against a wall or tree. The goal is to restrict the camera's movement as any movement will be accentuated in the final video and makes for a dizzying shot.

Shoot Outside

The lighting outside is always much better than inside and the resultant video will be clearer and less grainy. Avoid shooting into the sun (keep it at your back if possible) as your subject will be backlit dramatically. Overcast days are wonderful days for shooting video as the light is uniform and shadows are at a minimum. If you must film inside, try to find a place where the light is abundant.

Avoid Shadows

Don't let the subject stand in a shadow as camera won't be able to see him. If he is under a tree, be sure you are also under that tree so the lighting will be consistent between the camera and the subject.

Equipment

All that is needed today is a smartphone or hand-held digital video camera—anything that records to a compact flash card, memory stick, or SD card is great. The resolution and optics of the device really aren't that important and even today's \$100 cameras are more than enough. Older cameras that record to tape can also be used, but it can be difficult getting the video off of the camera and into e-mail.

Conclusion

The CBMA would like to thank you for your help in documenting ecclesial life in the Mission Fields as we strive to share the need for this important work with the brotherhood worldwide. Should you have any questions about any aspects the filming process, please contact us at <http://www.cbma.net>.