



Guide to Recording & Archiving Sermons

by Andrew Dodson

Sometimes, I'm asked how I record & archive sermons for The Point. I thought it'd be helpful to provide a step-by-step guide about the process. This same process can be applied to recording meetings, lectures, and more.

- **Take a feed from the soundboard.** Most people record directly from the soundboard's tape outs. I like to set up a separate, dedicated recording feed. The reason for this is to avoid any other inputs from the soundboard coming through the tape outs into the recording. For example, if a channel has a hum or buzz coming through, and that channel isn't muted during the sermon, your sermon recording will have the same hum or buzz. So, I take a feed from a direct out on the pastor's mic channel. I run this into a small Behringer mixer (any mixer will do).
- **Set your levels.** Make sure you leave plenty of headroom in your recording to prevent clipping. If you have an animated speaker, they might result to yelling at some point. You want to make sure you account for this and set your levels accordingly. Knowing your speaker's style helps greatly when setting levels.
- **Have two sources of recording.** Using the separate mixer also gives me the flexibility to record to two sources - a primary and backup. I don't always use two sources, but as a general rule, it's a good idea, in case one of your sources fails. Ordinarily, I would come out of the tape outs of my mixer into a computer or laptop. I could then use the main outs of the mixer to run to a portable flash recorder of some kind as a backup. I use an Edirol R-09 that I absolutely love. There are other options available.
- **Edit the sermon using software.** If you record direct to a computer, you can edit the sermon with the same software you use to record the sermon. I'm a big fan of Traktion for all of my recording needs. If you're on a budget, I suggest using Audacity (it's free!). In the editing process, I usually clip the front and back ends of the sermon and apply fade ins and fade outs (after all, who wants to listen to dead space?). Next, I apply EQ, a bit of vocal compression, and I boost the levels to a good volume.
- **Export as MP3.** If you plan on posting the sermon to a website, most recording software will have the ability to export the file as an MP3. You can also adjust the bit rate settings of the MP3 to make it web-friendly. I like to use a "variable rate" MP3 setting, and try to keep the file between 20 and 30 MB. You can make the files smaller, but keep in mind that it will start to affect the sound quality of the MP3 (you'll get the "warbly" sound).
- **Use simple file names.** Another web-friendly idea is to use simple file names for your MP3s. Titling them "No Ordinary Man - The Comedy of Jesus.mp3" might not be the best idea. I use a system that employs the date. For a sermon, I use "sermonYYYY-MM-DD.mp3" or "sermon2007-09-06.mp3." For our Hebrews bible study, I've been using "hebrewsYYYY-MM-DD.mp3." This also helps making links to the MP3 on your website much easier. Instead of trying to remember a complicated name, you can use whatever system for naming files that you come up with.
- **Tag your MP3.** ID3 tags include information about MP3 files. They can tell you the artist name, title of the song, and more when you play them in an MP3 player. iTunes makes this easy, but the downside of iTunes is that it will change the file name to whatever "song title" you give the MP3. Instead, I like to use ID3 Editor, which doesn't change the file name.
- **Upload the MP3.** Using FTP is generally the best solution to upload files to the web. I use a free plugin for Firefox called FireFTP. There are plenty of other options available. I try to store all of The Point's sermons on our media site. So far, we've yet to reach our hosting package's limit for storage. You may be limited to your hosting package as to how many sermons you can have posted. I would recommend posting the last month's worth of sermons at the least.
- **Create a link to the MP3 on your website.** This is pretty self-explanatory. The Point's media site is powered by Wordpress, which makes updating the site extremely easy. If you're using a site created by software (Dreamweaver, GoLive, etc.) I strongly suggest moving your site to a content management solution like Wordpress. But, this is a subject for a different post!