

Investigative Journalism: The Missing Link in Christian Media Communication

A lot of Christian TV, radio and magazines are unforgivably shallow. There is a tremendous emphasis on testimonies, life stories and devotional material. As long as it is authentic, this is good in itself, but we have a real lack of profound investigated material. We need new types of Christian news articles and programs. We need to bring up well researched subjects that are both communicative and deeply rooted in the Christian faith. To be able to do this we need new thinking and new initiatives in the Christian media. In this session we will explore and discuss creating and utilizing Christian experts and think-thanks as a resource for Christian media.

Leif Nummela works as Bible teacher and theologian for the Finnish Lutheran Mission and is Editor-in-Chief for the Finnish Christian magazine *Uusi Tie*, a weekly periodical with 10,000 subscribers. He was educated as a Candidate of Missiology at the Institute of Missiology and Theology in Ryttylä, Finland; then took a Master of Theology from the University of Helsinki; and finally took a Special Degree in Leadership Training at the University of Applied Sciences in Hämeenlinna, Finland. He is an ordained pastor in the Ingrian Lutheran Church and has previously worked as both a missionary to Italy, and a leader of the Theological Institute in Finland. He has been a member of several mission and evangelism councils, as well as on the the Synod of the Finnish Lutheran Church. Leif is the author of 7 books, which have altogether sold over 40,000 copies, and has written and published over 1,000 articles in popular-level Christian magazines. Leif has been married to Irene for 32 years and they have 3 children and five grandchildren.

I. Christian media communication today – how are we doing?

A. We are doing quite well in the testimonial, subjective and devotional category - except perhaps on the “tougher side of life-stories”

1. Examples from magazines, radio and TV

2. Positive outcome:

a. Easy to get media coverage

b. Easy to get people interested

B. We are not doing so well in the area of research and investigative journalism

1. Negative outcome:

a. We are strengthening the subjective image of the Christian faith

b. We are promoting a nice but shallow and uncritical view of the Christian faith

c. We are promoting a Christian super star (idol) culture

- d. The only deeper thinking is presented in too special theological and dogmatic language
- e. As a result we are losing the battle for people's minds

II. Christian media communication today – what do we need?

A. Needed: Investigative journalism from a self-consciously Christian viewpoint

1. Examples of special areas where research is needed right now

a. On the family

- i. The impact on children of a heterosexual, monogamous family
- ii. Compared to the impact on children of a homosexual, polyamorous “family”

b. On the culture in general

- i. Impact of Christianity on science, morality human rights etc.
- ii. Question of religious violence

B. Two special challenges

1. Lack of expertise

2. Lack of courage to speak out

III. Christian media communication today – where do we get it?

A. We need to create Christian research centers

B. We need to support and rely on Christian researchers in different areas

C. We need to pool our resources

IV. Christian media communication today – how to do it?

A. Be courageous – fear God more than men

B. Interpret reality from a self-consciously Christian viewpoint – remember that everyone has a viewpoint

C. Be critical of the non-Christian establishment

D. Always double-check your facts

E. Never manipulate or distort what people are saying

F. Also give the minority and your critics a voice

G. Teach the Christian public to be more critical

H. Write more analytical articles and make deeper interviews

I. Make more substantial radio and TV programs

1. Exposing false thinking and harmful lifestyles

2. By making more critical interviews

“False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer, and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.” (J. Gresham Machen “Christianity and Culture”, Princeton Theological Review 11 (1913): 7)

V. Christian media communication today – some encouraging examples!

- A. Premier Christian radio – “Unbelievable” radio program
- B. Café Bibeln – TV talk show on TV7 in Finland, Estonia and Sweden (internet)
- C. The Christian magazine *Dagen* in Norway

Suggested Readings:

Marvin Olasky: *Prodigal Press: Confronting the Anti-Christian Bias of the American News Media* (Revised and Updated Edition)

Nancy Pearcey: *Finding Truth, 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism and Other God Substitutes*

Nancy Pearcey: *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Cultural Captivity*

Nancy Pearcey: *Saving Leonardo, A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals and Meaning*

Justin L. Barrett: *Born Believers, The Science of Children’s Religious Belief*

Robert Oscar Lopez, Andre Jenkins, Lisa Severine Nolland: *Jephthah's Daughters, Innocent Casualties in the War for Family 'Equality'*

Roy A Clouser: *The Myth of Religious Neutrality, An essay on the hidden role of religious belief in Theories* (Rev ed)

Roy A Clouser: *Knowing with the Heart, Religious Experience & Belief in God*

D. A. Carson: *Christ & Culture Revisited*

D. A. Carson: *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*

D.A. Carson: *The Intolerance of Tolerance*

Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell: *The Beauty of Intolerance: Setting a Generation Free to Know Truth & Love*

Craig G. Bartholomew, Michael W. Goheen: *The Drama of Scripture, Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*

Mary Poplin: *Is Reality Secular: Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews*

J. Budziszewski: *What We Can’t Not Know*

Gene Edward Veith: *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*

Os Guinness: *Fools Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion*

William Wood: *Blaise Pascal on Duplicity, Sin and the Fall*

Mark Coppenger: *Moral Apologetics for Contemporary Christians, Pushing Back Against Cultural and Religious Critics*

Ronald H. Nash: *Is Jesus the Only Savior?*