

THE ARTSPEAK CREATIVE GUIDE TO

# WHY YOUR CHURCH NEEDS STRATEGIC MESSAGING

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CAN THEY  
HEAR THE  
GOOD NEWS  
IN YOUR  
MESSAGE?



## STRATEGIC MESSAGING FOR CHURCHES? REALLY?

Most ministry leaders know they need a **great logo, colors, and fonts**. They understand they need an easy-to-use, beautiful-looking **website** and an engaging **social presence**. But how do you know you're choosing the right logo, colors, and fonts? Or that your website and social posts hit the mark? That's what's so powerful about Strategic Messaging for churches (or really anyone).

**It allows you to put intentional language around who you are, who you hope to reach, and what words will actually reach them.**

From there, every other choice you make gets easier, both in marketing and ministry.

But to some, "Strategic Messaging for churches" sounds like an oxymoron.

It might sound too business-y or heartless — a "good idea" that shouldn't affect the way Jesus followers conduct Kingdom work. But that's not our experience.

**In fact, we see precedent for Strategic Messaging in the Bible.**

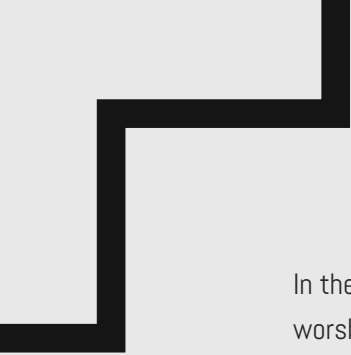
Consider the Apostle Paul. In Acts 13, he visited the city of Antioch and went to the synagogue. His audience: Jewish men who spent much of their time exploring and discussing the scriptures.

Paul had a lot of experience here. After all, he had been one of these men. They already knew they needed forgiveness for their sins because no one could ever fulfill all of the rules laid out in the Torah.

So Paul brought them **good news** — that Jesus forgives sin:

"Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. Everyone who believes in him is **made right in God's sight — something the law of Moses could never do.**"

Acts 13:38-39 (NLT)



In the next chapter, Paul and Barnabas arrive in Lystra, a city full of pagan Greeks who worship idols ... idols constructed to appease capricious gods who don't care about people.

Here's Paul's good news message in this very different context:

We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways, but he never left them without evidence of himself and his **goodness**. For instance, **he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts.**

Acts 14:15b-17 (NLT)

In short, Paul introduced them to the God who created everything. This God isn't capricious. He's kind and he cares.

Jesus remains at the center of this message, but he chose his words intentionally — and with **empathy** — so they would sound like good news to the listeners.

Paul used Strategic Messaging.

### **Communicating the gospel requires strategic messaging.**

The speaker — whether it be Paul, a Sunday-morning communicator, or someone sharing the good news one-on-one — must connect the dots between the message and the listener.

Because this message — which is probably bigger than any of us have ever made it in the past — must sound like good news to the person listening. That person must be able to hear it, understand it, and receive it for what it truly is.

But to accomplish this, you have to do some legwork. Before you start talking to a given audience, you have to ask:

- + Who are they?
- + What makes them tick?
- + What keeps them up at night?
- + What are their hopes? Fears? Challenges?



Once you understand a given audience's context, you can ask the next question:

**Where does the message of Jesus overlap with what the audience is ready to hear?**

That's when you have something to discuss with them.

## SO THEN, WHAT IS STRATEGIC MESSAGING?

Strategic Messaging is the process of:

1. Defining an organization's message, identity, goals, and reputation
2. Understanding that organization's primary and secondary audiences, including their demographics and psychographics
3. Crafting unique language that helps communicate the organization's message to those particular audiences

A **Strategic Messaging Document** does all of this by distilling the three main elements of the Communication Triangle:

- + Who you are
- + Who you're called to reach
- + What words you use to communicate your message to those you're reaching

(Download a [free PDF of the Communication Triangle here.](#))

Here at ArtSpeak Creative, we have a custom document we call a **Messaging Blueprint**. Various organizations have different names for it. (Donald Miller of Storybrand calls it a **Brand Script**).

Here's a short description of the process behind our Messaging Blueprint.



## Discovery

Research and revelation come first.

If you're working with an agency like ArtSpeak, we'll help draw this information out of you. We start with a Branding Questionnaire ([here's a free version](#)), then schedule a call to discuss what we've learned, then find out more.

First, we'll want to know: **Who are you?**

You must be able to write down your organization's mission statement, vision, values, and goals succinctly. If you're the ministry's leader, this information can't merely live in your head. You must be able to communicate it to everyone trying to help you.

Then, we'll want to know: **Who are you trying to reach?**

Your initial answer might be "everybody." But it's hard for any single person, church, or ministry to be well-suited to reach every kind of person on the planet. So you need to think: "Who are we best-positioned to help?"

But you might also need to spend time "getting to know your neighbor," which is why it's often helpful to do some demographic research. This may take the form of one-on-one interviews or information from a market research company.

(For ministries, we like [Percept Group](#) and [The Arda](#).)

## Distillation

Next, you must boil down what you've discovered about yourself and those you're trying to reach.

A Strategic Messaging Blueprint defines:

- + Your organization's identity, goals, and reputation
- + Your primary and secondary audiences' demographics and psychographics (their hopes, fears, and challenges)



Then, we'll distill everything we've learned into a few words that we call "Pulse Words."

**Pulse Words are approximately five words that tell visual designers how your brand should feel based on everything we know about you and your audience.**

That "feeling" will infuse how you represent yourself in all elements of your brand — visual design, website, social media, sermon graphics, interior design, and more.

## **Messaging**

Finally, you have to decide what words best communicate your message to your audience.

It starts with empathy, asking, "Now that I know more about those I want to reach, how do I best share the good news with them?"

### **1. Value Propositions**

These are simple, direct, and memorable statements crafted to reveal what your ministry uniquely offers to those you're uniquely called to reach. They form the bridge between their hopes and fears and what you have to offer.

The **Primary Value Proposition**, which often serves as your tagline, summarizes all of your value propositions in a straightforward statement.

### **2. Core Story**

Your Core Story tells the journey of your ideal audience member and what will happen if they give your ministry a chance.

It won't do the hard work of discipleship for you, but it will give you more language to help your audience understand how the "good news" is actually "good news" to them.

(Here's how we wrote [the Core Story for Future Church in Washington, DC.](#))

### **3. One-Liner**

When someone asks you about your ministry, what do you say? Usually, it's your mission or vision statement — the internal language that doesn't speak to your intended audience.

A One-Liner is different. It's your ministry in a single sentence, crafted for those who don't know you.

## STRATEGIC MESSAGING IS NOT...

### 1. It's not about watering down the gospel.

It's not merely about getting more people to church this weekend, increasing your online numbers, or getting more money in the offering. It's not a bait and switch — promising something that has nothing to do with Jesus so you can trick people into hearing a gospel message.

However, Strategic Messaging does ask churches and ministries to think more creatively about their message.

Because maybe the gospel is more extensive than we've made it out to be.

Yes, it's freedom from sin. But the Jesus (and his message) has something vital to say about:

- + Depression
- + Sickness
- + Poverty
- + Social justice
- + Racial healing
- + Anxiety
- + Family and marriage
- + Singleness
- + And on and on

Paul understood: When you share this message, it matters where you start. **It must sound like good news to those listening.**

### 2. It's not a way to better "compete" with other churches. (Yuck.)

We have a heart for the Church as a whole. We imagine you do, too. Turning ministry into a competition goes against everything we stand for.

#### **Strategic Messaging helps you stop competing with other churches.**

For example: Maybe you're a small church with a coffee-house-style band. Maybe you meet around tables instead of sitting in rows.

The people who you'll reach would never go to the more traditional church down the street. They won't go to the larger church with over-the-top sound, lights, and video walls either.

They need to hear the good news the way you present it. At the same time, you'll probably never reach the people those other churches are called to reach!

That's okay, because it's going to take all kinds of churches to reach the world with this message!

## IS STRATEGIC MESSAGING FOR MY CHURCH A WISE INVESTMENT?

**First, Strategic Messaging is a practical tool, useful for nearly everything you're currently doing as a church.**

Putting language around who you are and who you're trying to reach will inform your logo, brand colors, and website.

But it's about more than that.

You'll understand the people you're reaching better. It will help you plan events, craft sermons, and (in some cases) structure your staff.

Once you become crystal clear on why you exist, who you are called to reach, and what it will take to reach them, you will inspire your team and empower them to become more effective at everything you do.

And when you need words for anything — your children's ministry web page, an email, or a social post — Strategic Messaging comes to the rescue! It provides language that speaks to your audience in particular.

**Second, it can inspire creative evangelism in your congregation.**

As you clarify your audience's hopes and fears, share them with your church, so they understand what "good news" looks like to people in your community.

For example, if your church is anywhere in North America, your audience is probably suffering from an **acute sense of loneliness**.

So, what's "good news" to the lonely look like? Maybe it means:

1. Teaching people how to form authentic relationships
2. Creating opportunities to invite friends and neighbors to low-pressure events
3. Supporting hospitality, small group Bible studies, or block parties



### **Third, it can save you from wasting money on your marketing efforts.**

A ministry can spend a lot of money on billboards, social campaigns, and ads. No doubt, these tactics all work well ...

But only if the message is correct, and only if it comes from a place of **empathy** with those you're called to reach.

Empathy doesn't scream, "Come to my church!" Or "Show up at my event!"

That's not like Jesus, and it won't sound like "good news" to anyone.

The story of Jesus is this: God himself came to earth as a human. He knew hunger, thirst, body odor, and everything else we humans experience.

He understood what it meant to be one of us long before he started sharing his good-news message.

We're called to make the same journey. We must do the hard work of understanding our audience. To know their hopes and fears more deeply.

And Strategic Messaging can serve as a vital piece of this challenging, never-ending process of learning to love like Jesus.

## **DOES YOUR MINISTRY NEED STRATEGIC MESSAGING?**

Maybe you think, "I just need a logo," or, "we need a better website."

But when it comes to reaching people, figuring out who you are, who you're trying to reach, and what language best helps make that connection, the Strategic Messaging Process — also known as "empathetic communication" — can make everything else more effective.

We'd love to talk to you about it. Schedule a free consultation by clicking the link below

**Schedule a free consultation by contacting us at**

[info@artspeakcreative.com](mailto:info@artspeakcreative.com)

