

# Shook tells pastors 'stunts' can open people to the gospel

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**SBC  
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GREENSBORO, N.C.—Kerry Shook, pastor of Fellowship of The Woodlands, near Houston, revved up the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference with a video of a professional motocross biker riding over several jumps in his church's sanctuary.

"While seeing that, I'd like to think that nobody here probably had a life-changing spiritual experience," Shook told the crowd during an afternoon session focused on contemporary worship.

"But somehow, God uses these crazy, creative, fun things we do to touch thousands of lives. And the motocross guy himself came to know Christ that very morning."

Motocross bike action—and similar attractions—draw the unchurched and cause them to drop their guard, he explained.

“They come in with their guard up and a chip on their shoulder. They wonder if you’ll accept them,” he said. “But they loosen up with five minutes of motocross and will then listen to 30 minutes of a gospel message.”

Seeing lives changed is what it’s all about, Shook said.

“You may say that’s just entertainment, but there’s been a seismic shift in our culture from being a church culture to a secular culture. We are missionaries in that culture, and I’ve had to learn their language to share the very same message that never changes — Jesus Christ.”

Erwin McManus, pastor of Mosaic in Los Angeles, agreed with the need for multilingual sensitivities—to prove his point, he broke into Spanish, then Korean, onstage during his message. And across the room there were smatterings of applause from people who spoke those languages.

“Some of you think: ‘He’s speaking in tongues. Throw him out,’” McManus said with a laugh. “But the people who knew the language understood me.”

Just as many didn’t understand all the words of his trilingual speech, many don’t understand the growing contemporary style of worship are misunderstanding its purpose, too, he explained.

“A lot of people are speaking a language we don’t understand, and we think they are rejecting Jesus but they are not,” McManus said. “We simply need to understand that they need to hear the gospel in their language.”

That gospel message, he said, is the same as in Acts 17 — every day we stand in the middle of many gods and are invited into a conversation with the unknown God.

“They need to know that he’s the unknown God, not the unknowable God. We need to return to the mission that Jesus gave us to change the world,” McManus said.

To get them into that conversation, Christians may have to work hard on linguistic skills, said Nelson Searcy, pastor of The Journey in New York City. But pastors should, he said, because they need to “do as much as possible to bring those on the outside into the gospel of Christ.”

Preaching from Colossians 4:2-6, Searcy said pastors should take the time to pray, preach with clarity and prepare with care in order to reach their world for Christ.

“Prayer has the greatest consequence to those on the outside,” he said. “Would you lead your church to pray for people in your area? Will you equip your people to pray?”

Prayer takes time, and preaching with clarity takes work, Searcy said.

“Don’t be casual with language — work hard at it,” he said. “The most effective preachers are the ones who take complicated ideas and present them in profoundly simple ways. I believe we should present one gospel as clearly as we can so that outsiders can understand.”

Faith and preparation affects the gospel’s reach, too, Searcy added. “God sends us opportunities but we’re not always wise enough to be prepared for them.”

For example, February is known for being the toughest month for relationships — more divorces and splits happen that month than any other, he said.

“We prayed and prepared for people to come when we did a series on marriage and relationships that month, and they did,” Searcy said —

marriages were healed, affairs were ended and commitments were made.

“There is some connection between the faith to prepare and God entrusting you with new people,” he said. “If you act on faith, God will bring the people.”

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