

## From a British Pastor comes this insightful article:

Dr. Gene Edward Veith over at his Cranach blog had a post up on Monday titled "PowerPoint corrupts absolutely" in which he highlights a critique of PowerPoint by Edward Tufte in the magazine Wired. From the linked article Tufte writes:

*Imagine a widely used and expensive prescription drug that promised to make us beautiful but didn't. Instead the drug had frequent, serious side effects: It induced stupidity, turned everyone into bores, wasted time, and degraded the quality and credibility of communication. These side effects would rightly lead to a worldwide product recall.*

*Yet slideware -computer programs for presentations -is everywhere: in corporate America, in government bureaucracies, even in our schools. Several hundred million copies of Microsoft PowerPoint are churning out trillions of slides each year. Slideware may help speakers outline their talks, but convenience for the speaker can be punishing to both content and audience. The standard PowerPoint presentation elevates format over content, betraying an attitude of commercialism that turns everything into a sales pitch.*

So, Tufte is making a case that PowerPoint is nothing more than a bullet driven commercial sales pitch. As somebody who has had to sit through what seems endless hours of PowerPoint presentations on the exciting world of metrology and measurement uncertainties in relation to mass standards, I couldn't agree more with Tufte's assessment that often such presentations are merely a "*pushy style (that) seeks to set up a speaker's dominance over the audience*" and rarely is useful in actually conveying information or teaching.

I was actually somewhat surprised that nobody on Dr. Veith's blog brought up the copious use of PowerPoint in many of today's churches. Heck, has anyone been to what passes for mission churches lately? Without projectors scrolling the words of Days of Elijah to croon along with the band and/or giving the seekers something pithy to fill in on their sermon outlines, most of these soul willing congregations would be lost as an SED mystic thumbing through a Pauline epistle (*trust me, you don't get more lost than*

that!)).

But is there an actual problem with PowerPoint being used in churches or missions or is the issue one of aesthetics? I would argue the former and not the latter.

For the last ten years consultants and church growth experts have made repeated claims that the church must look as much like the culture as possible so as to attract the unchurched seekers that, we are told, stay away from church because it is foreign to them. What better way to blend into the culture than adopting the basic sales tool of corporate America?

But as Tufte points out in his piece; PowerPoint has little to do with actual teaching or conveying of useful information but rather *“PowerPoint’s pushy style seeks to set up a speaker’s dominance over the audience. The speaker, after all, is making power points with bullets to followers.”* Tufte goes so far as to suggest that it would be better for children burdened with teachers who insist on using PowerPoint *“if the schools simply closed down on those days and everyone went to the Exploratorium or wrote an illustrated essay explaining something.”* Do we think less of churches that should be caring for our immortal souls than we do of schools?

With Scriptural literacy and Biblical understanding at a point in this country that even atheists and agnostics seem to have a better understanding of the Christian faith than do Christians, we don’t need to be dumbing anything down but rather we should be ramping up catechetical instruction like nobody’s business. We need to start believing the apostle Paul (*I know this will be difficult for the more mystic minded SED employee*) when he says in Romans 10:17:

*"So faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."*

Notice that the apostle didn’t say write spiffy pamphlets or slideshows with easy to read bullet points. Faith for us poor miserable sinners comes through the preached word! Believe it, it’s true! If faith came by reading bullet points wouldn’t the new atheists (who know Scripture better than most Christians but choose to reject it as foolishness or mythology) believe this Good News

and be saved? Does anybody seriously think that Christopher Hitchens or Richard Dawkins are going to come to faith through a Sunday morning PowerPoint presentation? If not, then why would we expect a dissimilar result when we subject the unchurched seeker to the same? Do we really expect the faithful believer's faith to be sustained through a PowerPoint presentation? If the answer to that question is yes, I would love to hear someone honestly try to make his or her case from Scripture or the Lutheran Confessions. Really, I would pay some serious coin to hear that apologetic argument.

So just stop with the PowerPoint nonsense in churches folks! No matter what they told you in your church worker's outreach extension course at Cowsbreath, the sacrament of PowerPoint saves nobody and entertains even fewer. On top of that, such goofiness during a Sunday service only ends up endangering the rescued kittens of a certain slack jawed yokel blogger (*see embedded picture to see what's at stake*) and nobody wants that... do they?