

# 2006: The Year for Podcasting – Christianpodder.com is the Place to Start!

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**P**odcasting is the hottest thing going! Making it vitally important for you to understand what it is and HOW you need to begin using it for ministry. It is not just about downloadable music, but podcasts are quickly becoming the means of choice for obtaining and listening to content of all types. It is important for you to start podcasting, not because it is the hottest thing going, but because it will be an incredible way to get your message out to the masses, both to your congregation and to the rest of the world!

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The iPod has been a remarkable success. Of course, when we talk about iPods and podcasting we are talking about pulling digital audio files from Websites to computers and MP3 players, with Apple's iPod being the most popular MP3 player on the market. I could fill pages with stats showing you that the sales of iPod and other MP3 players are astounding. In addition, all of the stats show that the numbers will continue to grow. You need to understand that iPods are not just for people that like to listen to music via headphones. Equipment is now on the market that allows you to listen to podcasts through your home stereo. In addition, while about half a million cars will be sold in the US this year with iPod ready stereos, within a few short years, car makers promise that number will grow to 28 million a year. Even clothing manufactures are making changes for the iPod. Levi Strauss, the jeans maker, has announced that this year they will release an iPod-ready pair of jeans. The last time Levi made a pattern change in their jeans for a new technology was when they added the little pocket for the growing popularity of the

pocket watch. Now, that little pocket will be redesigned for the iPod, with a cradle to lock into and retractable earplugs.

Of course, people love the iPod because they can take their music with them everywhere they go, but as I have already stated podcasting is about much more than just music. A year ago, Universities (such as Duke in Durham, NC) began using them as a required piece of equipment for their students, pre-loaded with student orientation talks and the ability to download lectures and audio text books from the school's Website. The Internet has become a major source of information in print, and, thanks to podcasting, a bounty of information available on the net is now available in au-



dio format. Walt Wilson wrote a fantastic article in the December 2005 issue of CCMag on why podcasting is growing, and why ministries should take note. If you have not read it, you need to do so as soon as possible (<http://www.ccmag.com/1205/1205internetministry.pdf>)

How is podcasting different from just streaming your Sunday's worship service from your Website? First, podcasting is searchable. Instead of depending upon people visiting your Website and listening to last week's sermon, you can catalog those sermons on a variety of topics, allowing people who are looking for information on a specific topic to find your audio file. This is where podcasting sites come in handy. They can provide the means to catalog podcasts on a variety of topics.

Christianpodder.com has debuted a site with many abilities and tools (more on this in a bit), specifically designed to host podcasts on subjects of interest to Christian listeners.

Podcasting allows you to create specific content, searchable by subject, without specific time restraints, presented in a personal one-on-one format. Because people don't necessarily want to listen to audio content while sitting in front of their computers, podcasting to an iPod or other MP3 player allows people to take your content with them and listen at their convenience, in their car, at work, or even while taking a walk or working out.

With podcasting, if a person likes the content you provide, using a host service, such as

[www.Christianpodder.com](http://www.Christianpodder.com), they can subscribe to your content, and have it automatically downloaded to the user's computer.

## Christianpodder.com

So how do you podcast? Where can you make it available to the masses (besides those that visit your

church or ministry Website?) Let me introduce you to Christianpodder.com, one of the only podcast sites dedicated solely to podcasting Christian content.

Christianpodder.com provides several services. First, they seek to help ministries and churches understand the simplicity of creating podcasts. They provide some simple instructions to explain what podcasting is to your congregation and how to get started. Last Sunday, I visited a church that had a cassette-duplicating machine in the lobby. In talking with me, they were very proud of the fact that they could provide cassette tapes of their worship services, ready for pick up, at the end of the service. These tapes were being made for members to take to shut-ins that are not able to get out and attend the service. While this type of ministry is still important, it does little to help us take our message to others outside of our congregation. In fact, it would be hard for me to find a way to play a cassette tape in my house. I don't have a cassette tape-player in my car or home!

Christianpodder.com can also provide hosting for those wishing to contribute. What is the advantage of hosting your podcasts with Christianpodder.com verses just making them available from your Website? The advantage is that people will be visiting Christianpodder.com looking for content, your content, if you are providing content that can help meet specific needs. Users visiting Christianpodder.com can search for podcasts by keywords, by ratings given by other listeners (something that Amazon.com found important when selling books), or by how recent something was made available, and even by specific languages (English or Spanish at this time.)

You can also specify the intended audience demographics, helping people find content created just for them. You can set the gender, marital status, age grouping and intended listeners for example. You can also select specific in-

tended audience ministry information, including denomination, ministry age level/experience, ministry role (Church planning, deacons, homebound, etc.) ministry interests (including administration, evangelism, giving, prayer, etc.) and even the level of theological training, church involvement and spiritual maturity.

You can even provide podcasts on subjects of Christian living or general interest. Christian Computing is in the process of creating a series of podcasts on security issues, such as how to deal with dangerous e-mails, identity theft, spyware, firewalls, etc. that can be downloaded. Of course, we will be listing these on our Website in the months ahead, but you can bet we will also become a content provider at [Christianpodder.com](http://Christianpodder.com), because we will be able to reach people that are looking for our content, although they know nothing about our Website or ministry.

The site is new (only open about two months) but it is quickly filling up with content. To get started using the site (especially if you want to do the automatic subscriptions to specific providers or content, you simply download some free software (for Windows or Mac) that is designed to sync with your computer and [Christianpodder.com](http://Christianpodder.com)'s content.

Want to become a content provider? It is easy, and believe it or not, it is free! [Christianpodder.com](http://Christianpodder.com) has a lot of helpful information, as well as the tools to get you started. Visit [www.Christianpodder.com](http://www.Christianpodder.com) to start listening to podcasts designed for the Christian listener, or click on the "Contribute" and learn how you can quickly begin to contribute content from your church or ministry.

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