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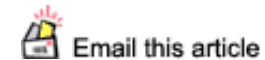
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Christianity Close-up

A faith-based video production company creates a cutting-edge documentary.

BY KIMBERLY LUSTE MARAN

I recently journeyed to Loma Linda, California, with the objective of meeting and interviewing the two co-owners/coproducers of Parable Maker. I was planning on a "typical" interview session with maybe a few quirky answers here and there. What I got was much, much more. I got an amazing story of faith, work, perseverance, and courage. A story so big, so full of exciting and inspiring detail, that I've sat for hours at my computer-reworking, rewriting, wondering how to shrink the tale into digestible pieces. Wondering how to get a 20-page story into five tiny pages. After a season of prayer (again) this is my latest and final attempt (the deadline is here!). I hope I've done Edye and Mark justice, and I hope my Father is pleased.

AS SOON as Edye and I stepped into the beige-carpeted condo on a sunny Wednesday morning in southern California, he kicked off his shoes. Mark was already barefoot. A quick tour of the small single-level home/office showed a comfortably and professionally decorated work space. A work space that also served as sleeping, eating, and living space. I noticed, as the thick pile sank beneath each of my steps, that Edye's work space was tidy-pens and paper symmetrically placed on the desk, no clutter in evidence. Mark's office was cheerfully scattered with papers and projects and Post-its. But later, as personalities emerged through answers to my inquiries, I discovered that while both shared a phenomenal faith in God, Mark was practicality while Edye was passion. Dissimilar individuals who share the same goal-and the same energy-the two work well together, each supplementing and even teaching the other.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. I must first share what Parable Maker is, how it got started, how it operates, why it is a ministry, and what its mission is.

An Inherited Dream

After the tour I arranged myself on the wraparound sofa in the living room and got my tape and notepad ready. A stir outside in their small fenced-in yard got me glancing out the window. "Oh, those are our cats," said Mark. "Want to meet them?"

We went outside, and I was introduced to two charming felines, who jumped and bounced from lawn table to roof to fence to ground. Later I'd realize that the cats shared one thing in common with their owners- incredible energy.

Back inside the Ikea- and Salvation Army-furnished condo, Edye, Mark, and I sat on the brown sofa and we began the interview.



DOWNTOWN:
Edye Campos (left)
and Mark Phillips go over interview
questions with Pastor Shasta Burr in
Seattle, Washington, right before the
cameras roll.

Edye Campos, 33, and Mark Phillips, 28, are the driving forces behind the video production company known as Parable Maker. But they are quick to say that they aren't the only ones with either the ideas or the work hours behind their biggest project, the video documentary series *Anyone, Anywhere*.

"It is not original. There are probably a million other people trying to do what Parable Maker is doing," comments Mark. "Edye and I inherited this shared dream. But maybe Parable Maker will be the one that does it first."

Edye adds, "There's nothing original about Parable Maker; the Bible says

there's nothing new under the sun. The reality is that other people have dreamed the dreams of Parable Maker. They've dreamed of doing a documentary, of doing a film. The difference is that for whatever reason, they did not succeed. Maybe it wasn't God's timing, wasn't the church's timing, whatever the factors-here we have, once again, another ministry tapping at the door, waiting to enter. The questions is will we?"

So what exactly is Parable Maker? And what makes it different?

In the Beginning

Parable Maker was started in 1999. Shasta Burr asked Edye to give a presentation on media ministry at conneXions '99 because at the time, he was working as an actor in Hollywood. Edye had just quit acting- he'd sensed God telling him it was time to stop and go back to ministry. No questions asked, Edye started working as a pastor in Grand Terrace, California. At the same time these changes were occurring, Edye presented at conneXions '99. At these young adult meetings held in Silver Spring, Maryland, Edye realized God had led him to acting to show him the need in media for Christ-based materials. After his media ministries presentation, he met Jerry Caloroso.

"After the talk," expounds Edye, "a guy named Jerry came up to me and mentioned he was encouraged by what I said, that it was the same vision that his friend Johnny and he had. Jerry introduced me to Johnny Bennet. The two of them had gotten together and figured they needed to do something in media. At that moment I told Jerry, 'I don't care where you guys are, where you live, but tell me where you are and I will go.'"

Parable Maker Out-takes

"He laughed and said, 'You're not gonna have to go far, because actually we are two blocks down the street from you.' Apparently he lived in Loma Linda as well. God took me clear across the country to show me that exactly where I was was exactly where he wanted me to be. It was a powerful lesson."

Edye went back to Loma Linda and moved into a house with the others. He slept on the floor, had no clue about production or anything related, but felt that God was calling him to be involved. Thus the three of them—Jerry, Johnny, and Edye—started Parable Maker and were immediately hired to do a video on diversity for Loma Linda University Medical Center. They quickly discovered the need for someone who really knew how to direct and write. Jerry suggested Mark Phillips, a friend and former business partner who happened to be a writer, director, and producer.

"I was in Reno [Nevada] working on screenplays when Jerry called," interjects Mark, "and haven't finished either of them to this day!"

"That's when Mark joined Parable Maker," continues Edye. "Just a few months after its birth. Since then we lost the other individuals, but now we've been here three years."

Mark, perched on the back cushions of the couch, grins at his partner, who shares a wide smile back at both of us. Mark swings agilely around and bounds to the kitchen for a water refill. Edye sips from his own cup and thinks for a minute. I've just asked him about the company's name, a sort of odd-sounding moniker for a production company. As Mark climbs back onto the sofa's edge, Edye explains that Parable Maker was a takeoff from something a former colleague had started that was named Hat Maker. The new company stuck with the concept and put a different spin on it by adding "Parable," because of the Bible. Edye goes on, "Jesus spoke in parables because it was a language the people could understand. That is why we're called Parable Maker—we are called to follow Christ's example."

"The other part of it is that in reality parables are nothing more than



THE ARRIVAL: Charome Kacharoen captures footage (for the documentary's "establishing shot") of Adventist musicians Big Face Grace as they arrive for a concert in Nashville, Tennessee. Parable Maker also shot portions of the concert, which was attended by 10,000.

stories with a Christian message behind them, and that's one of the things we do. When Mark creates a story and we piece it together, he is always sure that there's a message that is clearly being sent."

"Jesus was a lot of things to a lot of people," Mark adds. "If you were to ask Edye or me or other video people, [we would say that] Jesus was a great communicator. Jesus was also a healer, and He was a relationship person. But for us, the most potent thing that Jesus was was a communicator, and He used parables to paint a moral that you'd never forget-you'd remember the story and not somebody preaching at you. . . . [He] was a master communicator, and that is what we use as an example, not just preaching to people but finding stories so that in the subtext, subtly, that story is being ingrained in their psyche. It is being absorbed, and it's something they can take with them [and] inside of them."

But why use video? And why a documentary?

A Real Difference

"If you ask people today," Edye says, "especially the younger generation, what language they are speaking, they'd say television, music, video, computers-that is the language today."

Growing accustomed to the quick switching between the production partners, I turn to Mark as he agrees with Edye and adds his perspective: "The approach for this documentary is like a sermon on tape. It is going to be testimonies of people, documenting real movements of young people in ministry. There's nothing fake or fabricated about it, and to tell you the truth, we are asking people questions that are sometimes hard to answer. . . . We did our second story in Seattle [Washington]; we documented church planting with the AnchorPointe group. We interviewed a girl named Angel, who had just come to this new [Seattle] church. She is a fashion designer with spiked hair, tattoos, piercings-and she was as real as it gets. This video is going to be a testimony of what is real out there and what people are doing."

Edye speaks, moving from his seat to the kitchen as he depletes his cup of water. "One of the things that impressed me so much about one of the stories is a comment that Shasta Burr [of AnchorPointe] made to us when we were interviewing her (it will give you an idea of their fresh approach): 'The way we define evangelism is bringing a person one step closer to Christ.'

"That is a lot of what this documentary is about, taking the Christian life and putting it in a perspective that is real, but also a lot more positive than what society has put it in. People are going



HELLO FROM HAWAII:
Theology student Lemar Sandefur (middle) poses with Edye Campos (left) and Mark Phillips before they get their video shoot underway. Sandefur, while being filmed, visited the Ohana group in

to see the struggles of the people we are interviewing and say, 'These Christians aren't so bad, they are real. They aren't perfect; they don't claim to be perfect. They are just like me. I can be a Christian too.'

Honolulu, experiencing cell church with Ohana's energetic young adults.

Water glass filled, Edye reclaims his spot on the couch. The sun streaming through the large windows behind him has shifted-the morning patterns on the floor have disappeared as the sun stands over the condominium. I glance around the room as I work the kinks out of my slightly ink-stained fingers and think not for the first time that, with the furniture's neat angles and placement, this abode makes a great place to bring clients-the home space is also aptly appropriate for the conducting of business. I mention this to the duo and receive a thank-you back. Then they say in a combination of seriousness and humor: "Hopefully we can pay the rent this month and continue to use it." With that perfect opening, I ask Mark and Edye what their struggles have been, how they've overcome them, and what their goals are for the future.

For both Edye and Mark, the past three years have pulled at the very fibers of their faith, but with a calm assurance that touches even my somewhat cynical heart Edye shares the big picture-how sacrifice, struggle, and miracles spin around Parable Maker. He says, "For one thing, we don't have any money in our bank account right now. That's the way it's been since the moment we started Parable Maker. We've been doing this for three years, and that's three years of not knowing at the end of the month if we will have money for the bills. God somehow provides, but it is just enough to pay the bills."

"You should see us when we cram our crane and our cameras in [one of our old sports cars]," Mark responds. "Edye's got this two-seater, so we can't even use his car. One time we used a rack and strapped the equipment on the roof. We just do whatever-"

"But after three years of doing it, of not knowing month to month if we're going to make it, we are still here, and that's a testament to God," Edye picks up enthusiastically. "The success that we have had is not by any individual, it is pure Jesus-God has provided, and that is what keeps us going."

Mark says, "We don't have health insurance, life insurance. Do we have car insurance? I think so. No medical, no dental-I haven't been to the doctor in six or seven years. And all the furniture you see here, it is still on our Ikea credit card, and we're hoping we can pay it off."

"Everything we are doing is of God. It points to God, it promotes God, it helps God's kingdom."

Edye speaks again: "And here's an example of our diet: I make my beans and rice, the cheapest and most nutritious meal we can have,

and we eat that every day of the week. We have done everything we can to make sure we are good stewards of the money we've been given by God through the Pacific Union Conference. We give ourselves, for example, about \$50 a month [from our Pacific Union grant] to live off.

The rest goes right into the video."

So why is this a ministry?

Ministry and Miracles

With laughter Edye exclaims, "Look how much we're getting paid!"

"Every story we do helps another ministry," answers Mark. "Another project, the CD sampler Edye is working on, for example, is going to help the ministry of 15 music artists. And AnchorPointe may find a donor that sees the video and wants to help. . . . The cell church story may help young people start a small group, showing them that they should go outside their normal area and introduce God to others. . . . that's a ministry."

"On the other side," Edye adds, "nothing we've ever done has been about the dollar. In business, that's all it is. You don't believe that? Look at the way we live, the way we eat, the sacrifices we've made. I've even had family members stop talking to me because they don't agree with the fact that I left a pastoral position and opportunity just to be able to do this ministry."

Mark goes on to explain that they've even lost their equipment several times. The first was when one of the partners left and took his leased \$65,000 of equipment with him. They were left without any equipment. The team prayed. Two months later Parable Maker obtained \$60,000 worth of equipment. But not more than a few months later someone stole it. After they lost equipment for a third time (on the same night), the former partner gave them back the original equipment because, he said, God convicted him to. Now Edye predicts that Parable Maker stands to lose its equipment for the fourth time, since borrowed equipment may need to be returned. The irony makes Mark, Edye, and me chuckle.

"But there have been so many miracles," Edye is quick to add. "How do you get a person to buy you \$60,000 of new equipment and say, 'Here, it's yours. Go ahead, use it.'? That's one miracle. That equipment was stolen, and in the process we lost two more members. That same month we got the grant. The union said, 'Here's \$42,000; go out and do this video.' When do you see our church do that? How can you deny that God is in this?"

And so with God in the driver's seat (or director's chair, if you will), Edye and Mark have high hopes for this documentary and its distribution. Hopes tinged with realism. They plan on getting it to academies, colleges, and universities (both Adventist and secular campuses), churches, youth groups, Adventist Book Centers, and Christian bookstores. They also are looking into local cable access

channels. At this point Edye shouts, "Wal-Mart!" and laughs a bit. Then he becomes more serious: "It is a giant, but I believe that maybe God is waiting for someone to just try. It wasn't until *Veggie-Tales* tried that they were successful. In other words, the sky's the limit. We are going to hit everything, and we're going to hit it hard."

And while they are hoping for Wal-mart, they are keeping it real. "Once the video documentary is done and we show it to people, then hopefully some people will come forward," Mark says. "No matter what," he confides, "someone is gonna see this video." In addition to U.S. distribution in English, the team also plans to make copies of the documentary in several other languages.

Parable Maker's partners are praying that once people see the documentary, they'll be moved-in a variety of ways. One goal is that when Adventists see this documentary they will realize that there is a need, and next time, when Parable Maker asks for funding to continue the *Anyone, Anywhere* series and make a short film that would be shown in theaters (as other Christian churches are doing), they'll donate.

Parable Maker also wants to reach Adventist young people, especially those in public universities, who feel as if the church doesn't do anything for them. They hope that when these young adults see the video of young people in ministry, they'll become inspired, for example, to start a small group like the ones in the Hawaiian cell church story. Mark and Edye hope that the ministry ideas in the documentary will "recycle" themselves in those who view it.

Edye and Mark explain that some current programming gives the impression to the younger members of the church that,

A Candid Shot: Fast Facts About Parable Maker

- *Anyone, Anywhere* is the name of the documentary series Parable Maker hopes to produce. Their first video is entitled *Changing the Face of Church*. It is due out this summer. For copies, e-mail parablemaker@hotmail.com.
- *Changing the Face of Church*, the first documentary, is produced by Parable Maker, with major help and support from Brian Williams, Derek McCoy, and Charome Kachoaoren.
- The first in the *Anyone, Anywhere* series will showcase three ministries (Ohana cell church groups in Oahu, Hawaii; church planting in Seattle, Washington; and Big Face Grace, a contemporary Christian music group from California) in which young adults are actively involved, from the point of view of young adults.
- Another project, *Catch of the Day*, is an interactive CD sampler spearheaded by Edye Campos. Mark and Edye are working with La Sierra University in producing a CD of young Adventist contemporary Christian music artists. Marcell Schwantes is the communication consultant for *Catch*.
- Parable Maker has done other video projects and offers an interactive Web site, created by Jay Razzouk, that highlights some of these and offers more information about the corporation itself.

[See a sample video of the Parable](#)

according to Edye, "when you become a Christian everything becomes glorious and perfect-as long as you become a Christian, all your problems will be taken care of. That's not true. The secular world, and our generation, knows that. We are trying to say to them, 'You're right, the problems don't change. But what *does* change is that now you have the reason to continue living, you have the hope you didn't have before-that is, that life *will* be different."

[See a sample video of the Parable Maker.](#) (Real Video)

"We've gotten a lot of support from our other producer, who usually remains behind the scenes," Mark is sure to add. "Brian Williams has helped us immensely. And we've gotten a lot of support from people, from church leaders. But the movement as a whole has not happened-the church seeing the need for young adult programming. It might take them seeing this one documentary. They may like it and ask when the next will come out, but if our business dies, there won't be a next one.

"Here's the reality: Edye and I know that this could fail, but it won't be because it wasn't good or that the message wasn't there, [but] maybe the people just aren't ready for that message yet; maybe it is a little too 'real' for them. If it takes baby steps for people to get closer to God, then so be it-if we fail, then maybe somebody that came in contact with us will say, 'It's my turn,' and maybe they'll be the ones. Maybe we will go by the wayside. . . . Everything we are doing is of God. It points to God, it promotes God, it helps God's kingdom. If this doesn't happen, so be it. We did our best, and we did it for God."

The sun was falling into the western horizon as Mark shuttled me back to the hotel in his noisy, dirty white 1987 two-door. The sky was darkening, but my spirit felt bright enough to light the world forever. I said a quick prayer for my two new friends and hurried into the lobby.

For a closer look, including separate interviews with Mark Phillips and Edye Campos, [click here](#).

Kimberly Luste Maran is an assistant editor of the Adventist Review.

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