CREATIVITY & DESIGN

A NEWSLETTER FOR BIBLE SOCIETIES ON ALL THINGS VISUAL • NUMBER 1

Welcome to the first UBS newsletter dedicated completely to creative thinking and graphic design!

Our hope is that a newsletter like this will help raise the visual level of Bible society materials, and we'll be known not only for the quality of our translations, but also for the design of our publications.

Of course, you can print this out and read it the usual way.

But this newsletter is really designed to be read on-screen. The format fits wide-screen monitors, which are becoming the standard display format for computers. And by reading this on-screen you'll also be able to directly use the hyperlinks that will take you (as long as you are connected to the internet) to resources on the web.
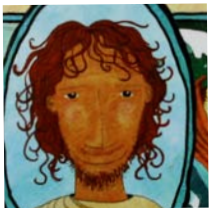
A newsletter like this will only be as good as the feedback we receive. So, if you have suggestions for future articles, or perhaps something to contribute, please write to the address on the next page. We hope to hear from you!

CREATIVITY & DESIGN

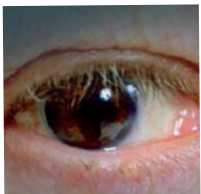A NEWSLETTER FOR BIBLE SOCIETIES ON ALL THINGS VISUAL • NUMBER 1

Contents

If you are reading this on-screen, please note that all hyperlinks are highlighted in blue.

CREATIVITY & DESIGN is sent out as a way to serve national Bible Societies. While I've written the material in this newsletter (and had some fun doing the illustration on page 5), you're invited to submit manuscripts (less than 1,000 words) for future editions. Case studies showing good design in the UBS fellowship are especially welcome, especially publications with non-Roman scripts.

If I can provide a consulting service to you in the area of design and creativity, please write to me at the email address below.

Randolph Capp
Design Consultant
UBS World Service Center
randolphcapp@biblesocieties.org

UNITED
BIBLE
SOCIETIES

Graphic Resonance

The young hero and the horrible giant

David and Goliath, from 1 Samuel 17

GOD'S PEOPLE HAD SOME scary enemies, but the Philistines were the scariest of them all. And now the Philistines had come to fight them. The Philistines had a secret weapon, called "Goliath." Goliath was a terrifying soldier, and — worst of all — a GIANT! A giant so strong, and so tall, and so scary that no one had ever been able to fight him — and live to tell the tale.

So, there they were: the Philistines standing on the top of one hill; God's people standing on top of the other. Every day, Goliath came out and shouted, "Send your best soldier to fight me! If he wins, we will be your slaves. But if I win, you will be our slaves!" No one spoke. No one moved.

"Chickens!" Goliath bellowed. "Your God can't save you! I'll rip your heads off and have you on toast!" His beady, greedy eyes glowered at them hungrily from under his horrible helmet — as if any minute he really might just gobble them all up. And he laughed his terrible laugh. "Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha" it boomed, echoing horribly around and around the dry, dry valley.

The word "resonance" is related to the word "echo." A sound is made in one direction, resulting in a similarly sounding echo returning to the source. Imagine shouting into a canyon. Your voice echoes off the cliffs and resonates back and forth. It is the same sound, but repeated in different ways and strengths.

A vital part of visual communication is "graphic resonance." This is where all visual elements (illustrations, photographs, graphics and typography) in a publication echo the tone and content of the written text. In his book entitled *Type and Image*, author Philip B. Meggs writes, "Every visual nuance and every decision made by the designer contributes to the overall resonance of the design. Typeface selection, scale and cropping of images...color,

and spatial organization all play roles."

Compare the two caution signs on the left. If you saw these at a building construction site, which one would you take seriously? Both contain identical text. Yet, the one below seems like a joke. Why?

The difference is graphic resonance. All the visual elements in the sign on the top resonate to deliver a consistent message.

Do your Bible society publications do this? Here's a suggestion: Make a visual audit of your publications. With the target audience and overall purpose of each one in mind, ask yourself, "Do all the visual elements work together with the text to deliver a consistent message for the intended audience?"

Youth Bibles should have different typography than pew Bibles. It is not enough just to put a different cover on an existing book block and call it a youth Bible. Nor is it enough to add a few color signatures to an existing book block with outdated typography.

Examine your Scripture portions, one by one. First ask yourself, "What is the primary purpose of this portion? What is the big idea? And who is the intended audience?" Then ask, "Does the typography, illustration, photography and graphic treatment all work together to communicate this message to that audience?"

One of the best examples of graphic resonance in Scripture publishing is *The Jesus Story-book Bible,* written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and illustrated by the award-winning illustrator Jago. *The Storybook Bible* was named Amazon.com's Best Picture Book of 2007. As you can see from the example on the previous page and the cover below, the informal style of Lloyd-Jones' writing resonates with the book's whimsical typography and Jago's creative illustrations.

Don't settle for less than best. Aim for graphic resonance in everything you do.

You can see more of the artist Jago's work by clicking on this link.
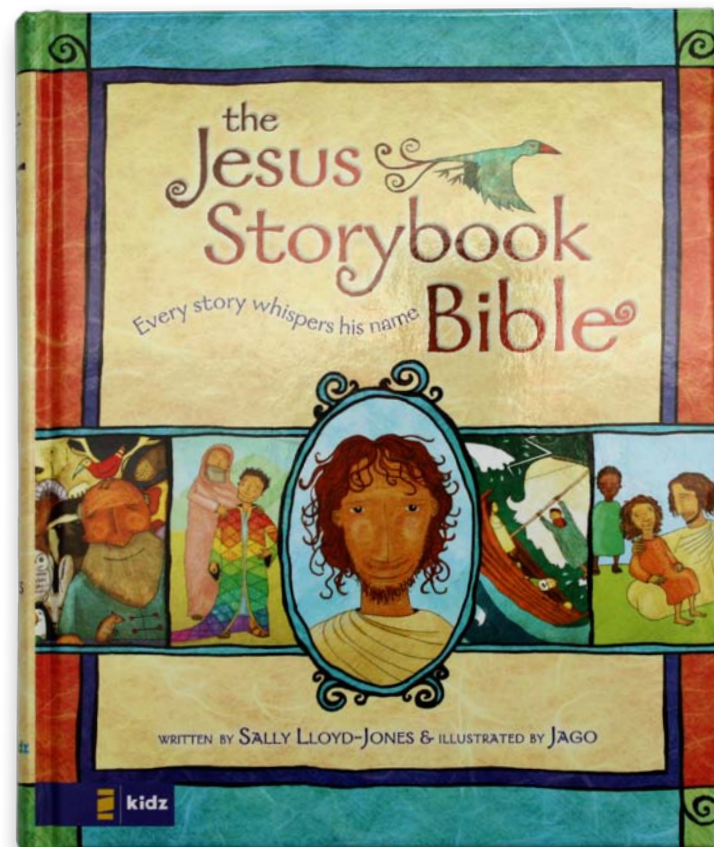
REACH FOR THE THIRD THIRD

Author Tim Hurson, writing in *Think Better,* divides the creative brainstorming process into thirds. The first third usually produces ideas everyone has had before. These are just under the surface of our consciousness, so they emerge early in the process. First third ideas seem logical. But in general, they are also what everyone else will do. As a result, you will not stand out from the crowd. *You will be the crowd.*

At the first third stage it is vital to refrain from settling on an answer. Hurson writes, "Ironically, the urge to know may be one of the most challenging obstacles to productive thinking. People who "know" can tell you all the things that can't be done and why.... Productive thinking requires that we not rush to answers but to hang back, to keep questioning even when the answers seem obvious."

Don't confuse settling *for* an answer with settling *on* an answer.

We need to move on to the second third, in which ideas emerge that begin to push beyond those initial thoughts. Second third ideas are more creative than the first, but are still extensions of them. The real goal is to move even past these and reach the third third. Here is where the most truly creative solutions lie.

Third third ideas come when all the old ideas have been flushed away. Dee Hock, the founder of VISA, once wrote, "The problem is never how to get new, innovative thoughts into your mind, but how to get the old ones out. Every mind

is a building filled with archaic furniture. Clean out a corner of your mind and creativity will instantly fill it."

Hurson offers some simple techniques for reaching the third third:

When all your ideas have run dry, try to consider the problem from someone else's perspective. Hurson writes, "Once

AN INNOVATOR'S GUIDE TO PRODUCTIVE THINKING

THINK BETTER

(your company's future depends on it... and so does yours)

TIM HURSON

you've listed the ideas that lie closest to the surface, the hard work begins. Many people stall here for awhile, and one useful way to kickstart the new wave of thinking is to give yourself some simple provocations such as the following: "How might your customers answer the question? How might your boss answer it? How might your best friend answer? Your worst enemy? How might your manager answer it? A retired person? A child?"

Another way to push past a creative tailspin is to use the word "else." Ask, "How else might we...?" Apply that to what you've already considered. Every time you add the word "else" to an existing idea, you push the limits out a little further. Eventually you end up in the wild and absurd. But that's just fine. Alex Osborn, credited

with developing the concept of brainstorming, once said that wild ideas are better, because "it's much easier to tame a wild idea than invigorate one that has no life in the first place."

Hurson also suggests going out for an excursion, ranging from around the office to down the street. Take note of what you see and experience, asking yourself, "How does this relate to what I'm trying to solve?" Let your mind make unexpected connections. George de Mestral took his dog out for a walk, noticed burrs sticking to his trousers and came up with the idea for Velcro.

Finally, take a break. Let the unconscious mind work in the background. Again, Hurson writes, "A basic productive thinking principle is to steep yourself in your issue and then forget about it for a while."

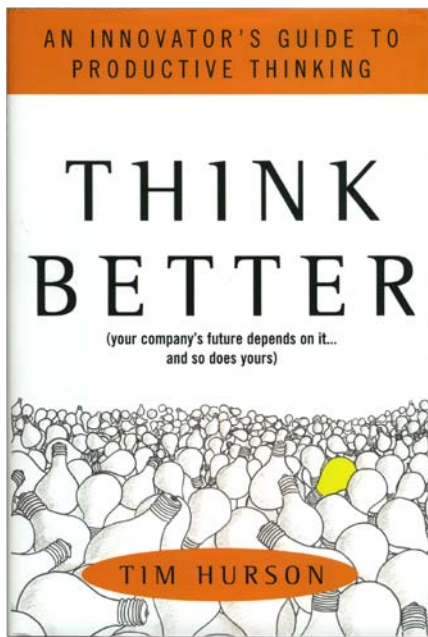Allow for sufficient time, but always carry a notepad so that
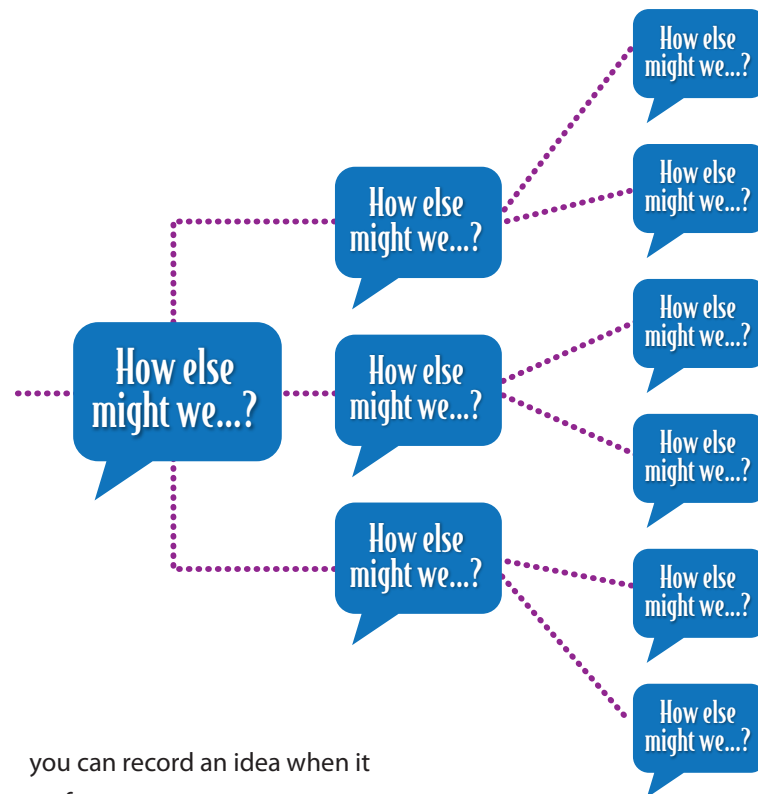
you can record an idea when it surfaces.

In my workshops I often try to emphasize that creativity is not magic, it is a way of thinking. Creativity is not a gift given to some, but not to others. We are all creative, because creativity is part of being in the image of God, who alone is the

ultimate creator.

Since creativity is a way of thinking, it can be learned and developed. When you face a problem requiring a creative solution, spend some time getting to the third third.

How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?
How else might we...?

HOW WE READ

Sometimes we don't arrive at the best answers simply because we don't ask the right questions. And when it comes to the design of Bible society publications, one question is at the root of all others:

How do people actually read?

Throughout most of the 19th century, it was assumed that the eye swept smoothly across a line of text. But in 1877 that began to change.

The first physical record of reader eye movements was made by Edmund Burke Huey, author of *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*. He attached a tiny cup over the cornea of a person's eye (that must have hurt!). The cup was attached to an aluminum pointer that moved according to the slightest eye movement and traced it onto a piece of paper. Huey showed that, rather than a smooth reading motion, the eye jumped from word group to word group, and paused in between each jump *(Figure 1)*.

Since then, researchers have discovered:

▶ The first pause is rarely on the first word in the line, but on the second or third word.
▶ The last pause is usually not on the last word.
▶ The shorter the word, the more likely it will be jumped over.
▶ The role the word plays in the sentence influences whether it will be jumped. Content words have greater pauses than function words.
▶ The eye doesn't always move forward. *Sometimes it moves backwards* along the line of text before moving again.
▶ The upper half of the word is more important for reading comprehension than the lower half *(Figure 2)*.

Figure 1

Figure 2

▶ We recognize single words as quickly as single letters.
▶ When the eye is "jumping," no useful information is provided to the brain. All the data we need for reading comprehension takes place only during the pauses themselves.

The mechanics of reading is a fascinating study.

Human sight has three ranges: foveal, parafoveal and peripheral vision. The focused range is called the foveal (named after the fovea,

Figure 3

which is the retina providing acute vision). It includes a 2-degree angle around the single point upon which the eye is focused. This equals about 6-8 letters of normal reading text. On the outside of the foveal region is the range called the parafoveal, which extends to about 15-20 letters. Beyond this is the range of our peripheral vision.

Several experiments have demonstrated that our brains use data in the parafoveal range, along with our knowledge of the language to anticipate upcoming words in order to determine how many words are jumped and where the eye will next pause along the line *(Figure 3)*.

For example, a 1990 study demonstrated that parafoveal recognition concentrates on the parts of words that carry higher amounts of information. For example, the word "underneath" is the only word of that length which ends in "neath." Therefore "neath" is more important for comprehension than recognizing "under." The word "engagement" has a common ending of "ment". Many words end like this. Therefore, "engage" is the most important part of that word for recognition.

These words were embedded in short stories and reader's eye movements were recorded as they read them. The results demonstrated that readers paused on these "higher information" areas, indicating that in their parafoveal vision, the brain subconsciously processed the word, indicated what part of the word was less essential in providing its meaning, and directed the eye to the higher information area.

What does this mean for the design of Bible society publications? First, remember that this applies to mature readers, not beginning readers who have not yet moved from letter recognition to word shapes. *Research has shown that this shift occurs somewhere around the age of ten.*

Since the basic units of reading are word shapes rather than individual letters. **All typesetting choices,** such as typefaces, letter spacing, line lengths and line spacing **should allow the reader to clearly see these shapes.**

For example:

x-height: A recent trend in typeface design has been to increase the overall height of the lower case letters relative to the ascender height. Since the ascenders (and to a lesser extent the descenders)
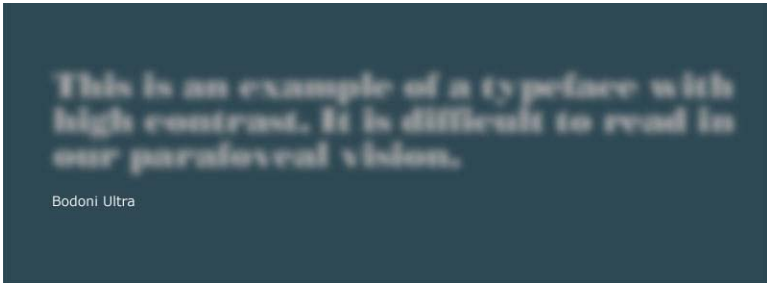
Figure 4

Figure 5

help establish word shape, they must be clearly seen.

Contrast: This is the difference between the thick and thin strokes of letterforms. Higher contrast typefaces should not be used for large amounts of body text. The eye is unable to visually connect which thick strokes are connected to which thin strokes and the word shape can be lost in the parafoveal vision *(Figure 4)*.

Letter spacing: There is often a temptation to decrease letter spacing in order to increase the number of words on a line. This can only be done with narrow limits before readability is affected. Just as the parafoveal vision is unable to see the word shapes in high contrast typefaces, it has the same difficulty when the letter spacing is too close. Tight letter spacing can produce confusion between pairs of letters. For example: rn can appear as m *(Figure 5)*.

Word spacing: The parafoveal vision must be able to distinguish individual words in order to establish specific word shapes. It cannot do this if the word spacing is too tight. And as the typeface size increases, so should word spacing.

Line spacing (leading): The eye needs sufficient space between each line of type. Longer lines need additional space. How much

is enough? That depends on the point size of the typeface being used. It also depends on the proportion of x-height compared to the ascender height. Typefaces with higher x-heights need additional line spacing so that word shapes can be clearly seen.

Line length: Since our eyes make visual jumps across a line of text, we should limit our line lengths to a comfortable number of jumps. A line of text with 66 characters (counting both letters and spaces) is widely considered the ideal length. But anywhere from 45–75 characters is considered satisfactory. The reason behind this is simple. Since the span of the foveal and parafoveal ranges of vision covers 15-20 letters, a 66 character line would require 3-4 pauses in reading. If the line length runs longer than 75 characters, it becomes increasingly difficult (as the length increases) for the eye to return from the end of the column and locate the following line of text. *By the way, two-column Bibles may be economical to print, but are often significantly lower than a 45 character line length.*

So you see, the mechanics of reading can be helped or hindered by good typesetting practices. Let's keep that in mind as we put God's Word into print.

UNITED
BIBLE
SOCIETIES