THE
WORSHIP MEDIA
Handbook

Jeff McIntosh & **cmg** church motion graphics

The Worship Media Handbook

by Jeff McIntosh

Published by

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Version 1.1

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The Worship Media Handbook

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff McIntosh is the Director of Church Motion Graphics and has a passion for church media. His desire is to see churches embrace art, design and technology and use them for the glory of God in live worship experiences.

Jeff got involved in church media production in 2004 when he became a member of a creative team for a weekly worship event that served the young adult community of Toronto, Canada. This experience got him hooked. His love for creating relevant and engaging media birthed a part-time business and a few years later a full-time business called Church Motion Graphics (CMG). CMG creates motion backgrounds, countdown timers and announcement bumpers that are available to purchase online and through the CMG Monthly Mega Pack subscription.

Jeff lives in the suburbs of Toronto with his loving wife, Heather, his playful son, Isaac, and cheerful daughter, Evelyn. Jeff enjoys being with family, connecting with friends, exploring new cities, healthy eating and serving on the creative team at C4 Church.

Feel free to reach out to Jeff anytime. He would enjoy hearing from you.

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FOREWORD

· ·

By Stephen Proctor | @stephenproctor

Over the past few decades, the technology of media and projection has become an increasingly popular element in our modern worship services. Technology tends to make things easier for us. And our screens certainly make communication and congregational singing easier on everybody. Right?

But sometimes it feels like technology is working against us, especially those of us who have to use it. It SHOULD be easier, but to some who are new to this whole thing, it can all seem very overwhelming. Both technically and artistically.

We all have good intentions for making the media we project onto our screens the best possible. We want to engage our community with both information and images. But how? That's where Jeff's handbook comes in!

I'm so glad to see a resource like this where the newest projection users are led through a step-by-step process of how to design slides that are both simple and beautiful.

But before you get started on this crazy journey of slide design, which will answer questions about typography, layout, editing and all sorts of other eye-opening goodies, you must first answer this question: WHY?

You see, a funny thing happened along the way to the sanctuary: we

discovered how to add images to our text. Next thing you know, JPEGs and motion loops are filling up our hard drives and illuminating our worship spaces. Presentation software has developed into professional, intricate apps that allow you to do almost anything you want, minus your laundry.

It's so easy to click a button and add that fun little effect. But just because you can doesn't mean you should. The power in your fingertips is more than you realize. And as media designers and artists, we are not here to entertain. We are here to lead visual worship.

"God gave us eyes so that we can worship Him. If we were not able to glorify God through what we see, He would not have created us with eyes to begin with." – *Anthony Lee, Visual Worship Leader in Hong Kong*

To this day, I have never heard a better explanation of "visual worship" and why I believe it is so important for the Church.

We aren't here to put on a good show or to display visual gimmicks that (we think will) attract people, as if we have something to sell. No, we are here to point eyes to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are here to create a visual space on our screens that will help our community worship Him through what we see.

This must be the foundation for any slide we create and for any image we put behind our text.

"Visual worship is declaration, not decoration. It isn't decorating a product for attracting, it's the declaration of a people for remembering."
– *Steve Frost, The Work of the People*

> "God gave us eyes so that we can worship Him. If we were not able to glorify God through what we see, He would not have created us with eyes to begin with."
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> · · · · · · · · · · ·
>
> Anthony Lee

"Visual Worship" is a phrase that many in the creative community are using to describe a layer of worship that engages people in visual ways. It involves seeing God's glory and creativity displayed around us, inspiring us to worship Him with our eyes and imagination, as well as responding to God's revelation in visually creative ways. This might take place in personal, more intimate settings, or it may be in the context of community where a "visual worship leader" is present.

As it is with any layer of biblical worship, visual worship has to do with our heart, mind and soul. Visual worship is NOT technology, images on a screen, creative projection, lighting, art or any form of production. These are mere tools. They are mediums through which we can visually worship, just as music is a medium for singing our worship. They might be the result and evidence of people who worship visually, but not always. The gear and creative result in and of itself is NOT visual worship.

"Visual worship is not about what your eyes see; it's about how your mind, your heart, and your spirit connect with and respond to God."
— Camron Ware, Visual Worshiper

Art and design can help us with this.

But the Church does not NEED "the arts" for art's sake. We don't need the arts more...we need Jesus more! Yet Jesus can be found in the arts in ways that He can't be found elsewhere. He wants to meet us there. The Holy Spirit is whispering the secrets of the Kingdom through image and story, just like Jesus did through image-rich parables 2000 years ago.

> **"**Visual worship is not about what your eyes see; it's about how your mind, your heart, and your spirit connect with and respond to God.**"**
>
> · · · · · · · · · · ·
>
> Camron Ware

Could it be that He wants to whisper through the images you project onto your screens? Could He actually speak through a motion loop or a photograph or a film? Could font selections and text formatting be a subtle yet appropriate vehicle to display the story of God? Do you believe that everything speaks?

If the answer is yes, then just think of what that might mean for you and your church!

Jeff's handbook is about to lead you through all of the intricate details of media design that will enable you to create beautiful, non-distracting presentations... presentations that will hopefully make space for the Holy Spirit to breathe on your congregation in ways you can't even imagine. But this will only happen if we keep our eyes fixed on Christ. And even then, it is not up to us or our talents. It is only up to Him. So whether you think of yourself as a designer or not, be encouraged... and know that God desperately wants our eyes to be opened and our souls awakened to His beauty. When truth and goodness is present, beauty leads to transformation.

So as we begin our journey of designing slides and enhancing our media, let us strive to keep the Creator, not our creativity, the center of our worship.

Stephen shares his passion for art, liturgy and visual worship on his site illuminate.us and in his ebook "The Guidebook for Visual Worship".

> **"So whether you think of yourself as a designer or not, be encouraged... and know that God desperately wants our eyes to be opened and our souls awakened to His beauty."**
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> Stephen Proctor
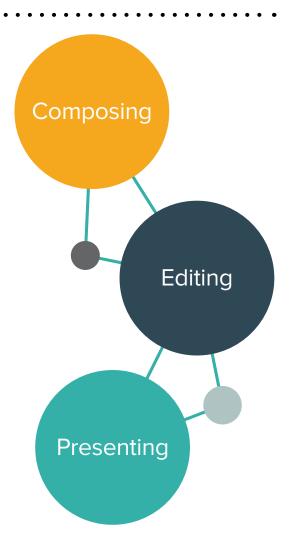
INTRODUCTION

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Thank you for purchasing this handbook. After reading it you will have a well-rounded knowledge of the worship lyric projection process from start to finish. This includes composing a presentation, editing individual slides and presenting live. This handbook focuses on the fundamentals of worship lyric projection and gives practical guidelines for running the most professional and engaging presentations during worship.

The idea for this handbook came to me when I found myself unable to attend a worship event where I was in charge of the entire projection process. The young volunteer who was stepping into my place had limited experience and there was not enough time to train him on all the fine details of worship lyric projection. At the time I wished there was a reference book that I could give him. A book with an overview of all the best practices on worship projection to give him an advantage when completing his tasks. Thus *The Worship Media Handbook* was born.

This handbook is perfect for training new projectionists, sharpening the skills of current operators and acting as a reference guide when you need help fast. No longer will volunteers and staff members be left to guess what to do, they now have a handbook to walk them through all components of worship projection.

As you read this handbook and work on improving the production quality of your presentations, you should be encouraged that you are not alone. Thousands of other churches around the world are on the same pursuit you

Composing

Editing

Presenting

are and we are all in this together. May God be given the glory and honor in all that we do and in every area where we serve the body of Christ.

Purpose of Lyric Projection

The primary purpose of worship lyric projection is to prompt your community when singing songs. All projected lyrics need to feel like they belong on your screen with readable text that is accurate and timely. When done well, this can help your community worship God. On the other hand, distractions contained in a poorly designed presentation will have a negative impact on an individual's worship experience.

If the primary purpose of lyric projection is to present the text, then the secondary purpose is the visual experience. When visuals are done well they enhance the worship experience to create deeper engagement and meaning for your community. Good visual design is not always noticeable, sometimes it is what goes unnoticed that makes a design great. Visuals need to flow seamlessly into the projected environment and sensory experience.

Everything you do as a designer and projectionist needs to glorify God and communicate His truth. Designing and presenting lyrics and slides to the best of your ability will ensure you are doing the most you can to help point people to Jesus.

Consistency

Consistency is key. Most of the guidelines in this handbook come down to this one important point. Whether it is font size, line height, punctuation, font choice, transition speed or any other characteristic of your presentation, it is all driven by a cohesive consistency.

Simply put, the more consistent your presentation becomes, the more professional it will be. Uniformity communicates purpose and well thought-out design. Work to deliver these principles in every presentation to create the very best experiences for your community.

If you only take one thing away from this handbook may it be that you must be consistent in your consistency. Always be mindful of your presentation from slide to slide, from song to song and from week to week.

> "Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."
>
> Antoine de Saint-Exupery
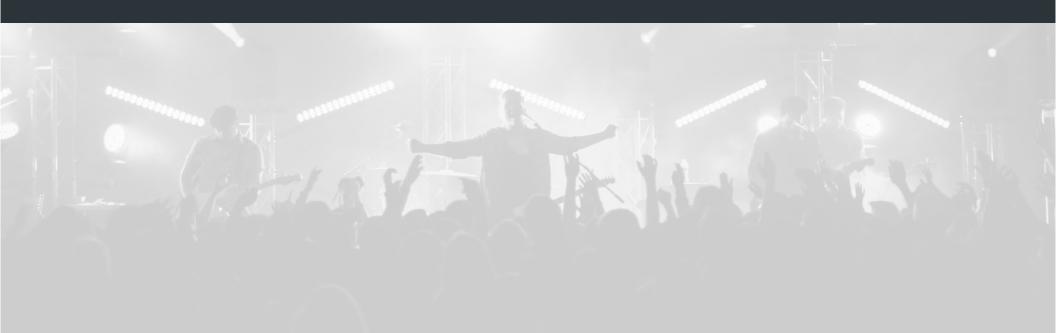
Preparation

Mistakes will occur more often when you do not leave enough time to prepare your presentation, edit it and run through it once or twice with the worship team. A rushed job will be noticeable by the errors it contains, because not everything was checked and double-checked before going live. Give yourself enough time to do everything the right way. Always check over your work and have a margin of time just in case something needs to be changed at the last minute.

Be at the rehearsal on time and have everything prepared in advance whenever possible. Familiarize yourself with the worship set, songs and order of service. Check to make sure everything is working properly, especially all the pieces of media. You can never be too prepared when it comes to worship projection. Do not underestimate the preparation time needed to put together a flawless presentation. It takes dedication and sacrifice to make sure your job is done to the highest standards.

"Start with the end in mind."

Stephen R. Covey

COMPOSING
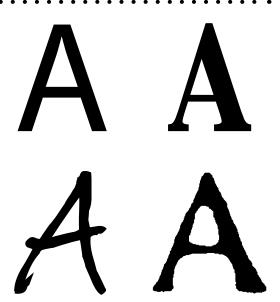
TYPOGRAPHY

Every font tells a story. How its lines curve, the thickness of its strokes and how wide the typeface stands are only just a few of the characteristics that tell its tale. The typeface used in this handbook, like most typefaces, tells a story that is studious and undramatic. It does not stand out on its own, it is easy to read, its letters form nicely together to create words and it is pleasant to read for long periods of time. On the other hand a typeface like this tells a different story. Its narrative is more personal, messy and raw. The chosen typeface for your projected text needs to be intentional. Randomly chosen typefaces might be telling the wrong story.

Be intentional about the fonts you choose. Communicate text clearly and never sacrifice legibility for stylization.

Consistent Type

The following sections will cover many different aspects of type. The key to creating a professional, organized and easy-to-read presentation is consistency. Once you are confident in your chosen styles, attributes and fonts, you need to stick with them. This will create a consistent experience for your community. The more inconsistent slides are from each other, from verse to verse or from song to song, the more noticeable and distracting they will be for your viewer. Only slide designers with a lot of

For further information about typography read "Useful Typography Tutorials to Enhance your Skills" by Christian Vasile.

experience should try combining different fonts together to communicate various themes. Be intentional about how your type looks because being reasonless makes your design meaningless.

Choosing a Font

Fonts come in a wide range of styles all with varying degrees of emotion. When projecting lyrics it is common practice to use fonts that carry little to no emotion. This is desirable because you want your type to merely be a conduit for your messages. Only on occasion will you want the style of your type to carry a message itself.

If your presentation uses more than two fonts then you have used too many. Do not use more than two fonts throughout your entire presentation. This will keep things looking clean, professional and cohesive. Fonts are loners by nature. Don't make them upset by forcing them to play together.

Readability trumps style. Never sacrifice the readability of your text or lyrics because of an artistic or creative choice. If what you are trying to communicate is unreadable then your message will be lost. Establish a default font that is readable and then introduce other design elements to add meaning and emotion.

Playtime

Playtime

Business

Business

Sans Serif Fonts

The default font on every Mac and PC computer is Helvetica or Arial which are both sans serif fonts. The name "sans serif" literally means "without serif", which is any protruding feature at the end of a stroke. Without serifs, a piece of text will have a simpler-looking form compared to a piece of text with serifs.

Some primary features of sans serif typefaces that make them the most popular typeface for worship lyric projection are:

- Clean and modern looking
- Easy to read
- Interlaced video friendly
- Less fine details
- Less line width variation than serif fonts
- Look great projected onto video screens

Sans serif fonts are a safe choice for almost any worship lyric presentation. They will complement today's worship songs with their clean lines, smooth edges and geometric shapes.

Popular sans serif fonts that are being used in many churches today are:

- **Gill Sans** - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- Gotham - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- **Helvetica Neue** - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- Myriad Pro - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

- Tahoma - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- Verdana - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

Serif Fonts

Serif fonts are commonly used in book publishing because serifs help guide a reader's eye along lengthy blocks of text. Worship lyric projection does not use large blocks of text, so serif fonts are unnecessary and therefore less commonly used. Save using serif fonts for projecting lengthy passages of scripture or quotes. Also try using a serif font as a stylistic choice for headings or titles if it fits your design theme.

Some points to consider when choosing a serif font are:

- Flickering of serifs can occur on interlaced video
- Looks more traditional
- More helpful for long blocks of text
- Serifs can become lost or blurry on low resolution projectors
- Serifs help guide the eye from letter to letter and word to word

Popular serif fonts that you may find useful when designing your worship presentations are:

- Baskerville - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- Bodoni - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- Chaparral Pro - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- **Clarendon - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog**
- Garamond - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

Decorative Fonts

On rare or special occasions you may want to use a unique font to make your text stand out or carry a message. For example, a script, handwritten or ancient-looking font can add a sense that something is sophisticated, authentic or from the past. When choosing decorative fonts, pick one that is heavier in weight so it stands out well on your screen.

The same rules apply to decorative fonts as to sans serif and serif fonts. Always be intentional about the fonts you choose. Use decorative fonts sparingly and test to make sure they look good when projected on your screens. Decorative fonts can be used to establish many different moods such as raw, natural, playful, serious, intimate or powerful. Stick to using only one or two decorative fonts throughout your presentation and get a designer's opinion on each one.

Fonts you should never use because they are cliché, overused and unoriginal are:

- Bleeding Cowboys
- Brush Script
- Comic Sans
- Copperplate
- Courier
- Impact
- Papyrus
- Zapfino

> "The life of a designer is a life of fight: fight against the ugliness."

Massimo Vignelli

Instead use these decorative fonts:

- Goodfish - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- Immortal - The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- Gapstown – The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog
- UglyQua – The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

For an expanded lists of fonts read "*Worship Lyric Projection Font Guide*" by Jeff McIntosh.

Visit these reputable websites to find free fonts:

- Font Fabric
- Font Squirrel
- Lost Type Co-op
- The League of Moveable Type

"Design is a plan for arranging elements in such a way as best to accomplish a particular purpose."
. . . .
Charles Eames

Font Size

The key to picking a font size is to not go so small that your audience cannot read it and to not to go so large that it breaks your lyrics up in too many unwanted places. Ideally you want to choose a font size that is comfortably legible when viewed from the back of your auditorium.

A proper font size will be between 32 to 64 points for a 4:3 screen and 48 to 96 points for a 16:9 screen. However, your font, software, operating system and screen resolution will all have an influence in determining the right value for your situation. Determine a single font size that works well within your space and stick with it.

Some other key points to consider when choosing the perfect font size are:

- Find the smallest font size that is comfortably legible from the back of your auditorium. There is no need to use oversized text if it is unnecessary. Large type is overpowering and gives the impression that you are yelling at your community.
- Too small of a font can lead to less community participation. When a word is small and difficult to read the human mind perceives it as less important.
- Spend some time testing different font sizes in your auditorium.

It cannot be stressed enough to keep a consistent font size throughout your presentation and especially within one song. As you switch between slides you never want the size of your text to change. Using different font

sizes will break the visual consistency. Do not increase your font size to fill space just because a line is short. It is preferable to have more of the background (or negative space) showing than to fill the screen with larger text.

Two questions to ask when determining the best font size for your environment are:

1) Is anyone squinting their eyes when reading your slides?
2) Can you comfortably read all your text from the back of the room?

Common complaints for projected lyrics are that the text is too small and it cannot be read from the back of an auditorium. In this case you will want to reexamine your situation and increase your default font size accordingly. If standard font sizes still do not make the lyrics legible for the elderly or visually impaired, try printing out songbooks to meet the needs of your community. This will accommodate their needs without having to resort to excessively large text on your screen.

The environment in which you are projecting will have an influence on the font size you choose. For example, a long narrow room with small screens will require a larger font, while a cinema theater with large screens in a relatively shallow space will require a smaller font.

> "Common complaints for projected lyrics are that the text is too small and it cannot be read from the back of an auditorium."

Avoid Small Fonts

If your environment has an undersized screen in relation to your room size, you might have a problem with your text being too small.

A few ideas to help allow for larger text are:

- Break up lines of text at natural points and put less text on the screen at one time
- Decrease the tracking (letter spacing) of your text
- Use a narrower font

Font Color

In the early days of video lyric projection you would commonly see yellow text on a blue background. Although this does provide a high level of contrast and legibility, the look is unflattering and downright ugly.

Today the default should be white text on a black background. Even when using worship backgrounds, don't get cutesy by changing the text color unless you have a very good reason to do so. When projecting text over a bright background use either black text or a font effect like a black stroke to make white text stand out from its background.
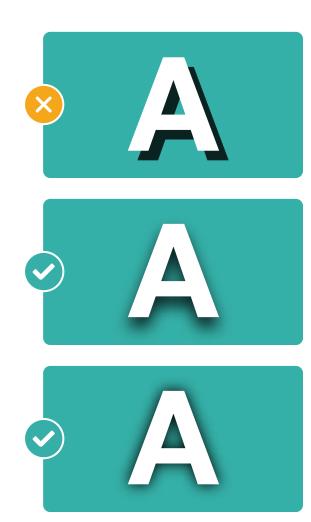
Font Styles and Effects

Drop Shadows

Drop shadows are a popular tool for separating white text from its background. The more neutral the background, the more helpful a drop shadow can be in separating the foreground text. With the correct settings a drop shadow can be an unobtrusive way to make text more legible on your screen.

A few key points to consider when using drop shadows are:

- A drop shadow can be subtle and still be effective
- Adjust your shadow's distance value just enough to help lift the text off its background
- Always use the color black for your drop shadow
- Blur your shadow to make its edges softer. This creates a more natural look than a hard-edged drop shadow
- Heavy drop shadows can overpower your text and should be adjusted to be more subtle
- Never use a black drop shadow on black text without using a white stroke as well
- Use a direction angle of 180 degrees so your shadow falls straight down. Do not settle for the default 130 degree angle
- Use an opacity level of 50 to 100 percent

One weakness of the drop shadow effect is that the bottom portion of your letters will be more visually separated from the background than the top. This is because a drop shadow is offset from the text by a specified distance. Having a distance of zero would remove the offset effect and create a glow around all the edges of your letters equally. This is a unique effect to help separate your text from its background while keeping a flatter look to your design.

Use a drop shadow distance (or length) of approximately 5 to separate your text from its background. Higher numbers will exaggerate your shadow effect and may be less effective in separating your text from the background. Smaller numbers will decrease your shadow effect and make it more hidden behind your text.

Be careful not to have so heavy a drop shadow that it overpowers your text. Use other tactics and effects such as strokes and heavier-weighted fonts to help your text stand out instead of cranking up your drop shadow settings.

Outline Strokes

Adding an outline stroke around each letter is another way to help separate your text from your background. This is especially helpful when you are placing text on a neutral-colored background that is neither dark nor light. Only use black strokes around white text or white strokes around black text. Never use a colored stroke.

The goal is to make your text more readable and help it stand out from its background. When strokes are done poorly they make your text harder to read.

Outline strokes have a few weaknesses to be aware of. Some software applications will slightly bleed the stroke over the text. This is why it is recommended to use bold and heavier-weighted fonts to compensate for the stroke bleed. Secondly, strokes can be overbearing and reduce the readability of your text. When first applying a stroke start with a value of 1 and increase the stroke one point at a time until the desired look is achieved.

A few key points to consider when choosing a stroke for your text are:

- A stroke weight between 1 and 5 is usually sufficient for most presentations
- Be careful that your stroke does not bleed over your type too much
- Only use white strokes with black text and black strokes with white text
- Strokes are best used with bold and heavier-weighted fonts

Combining Drop Shadows and Outline Strokes

In some circumstances it is beneficial to use a drop shadow and outline stroke together at the same time. This combination can really help separate your text from its background no matter if it is dark, neutral or light.

Drop shadows and outline strokes both carry their own unique strengths and weaknesses. When used simultaneously and in moderation they can overcome their shortfalls and work well together. Be careful that the combined result of these two effects does not overpower your text. Try dialing back your settings on both your drop shadow and outline stroke just enough so that your text is separated from its background. Experiment with your settings and find a balance that works best for your community and environment.

Making Text Pop

Other adjustments you can make to help pop your text off its background are:

- Bold your text
- Darken your background or decrease its saturation
- Decrease the ambient light in your room
- Remove distracting or detailed background images
- Use white text

Leading (Line Spacing)

Leading is the distance between the baselines (the line upon which letters "sit") of successive lines of type. Most presentation programs use a default leading value of 1.0 or 0 depending on your software application. This is ideal for paragraph writing, but not for presentations. The default leading value creates lines of text that are too close together and difficult to read. A better value would be 5 to 15 (or 1.2 to 1.5 depending on how your presentation software calculates leading). This makes projected lyrics easier to read because there is more space between successive lines of text.

If you do decide to use a larger leading value, be careful it does not add too much space between your lines of text. Too much leading makes lines of text look isolated from one another and therefore, more difficult to read.

Tracking (Character Spacing)

Tracking is an overlooked adjustment that can make your text become more readable. This setting is an adjustment that adds or subtracts space between the letters in your lines of text. By default your tracking amount is usually set to 0. Positive values will increase the space between letters and negative values will decrease the space.

For lyric projection it is suggested to slightly decrease the tracking value of your text to push letters closer together. By default, fonts usually have a little more space between letters than what is needed for projection. Choose a tracking value between -0.1 and -2.0 for the best results.
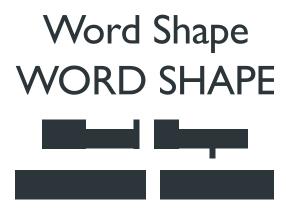
Decreasing the tracking of your text can help bring letters closer together allowing for more text on your screen or a larger font size. Find a tracking value that best fits your needs and stick with it throughout your presentation.

Using All Caps

Using all caps is self-defeating for two reasons. First, text that is entirely capitalized is socially symbolic of yelling. Secondly, it makes your text more difficult to read. We read words not by their letters, but by their shape. When a word is entirely capitalized its shape becomes an unidentifiable rectangle and the human eye cannot read it as quickly as if the text was in sentence case (combined upper and lower case). We are trained to read with capitals followed by lowercase letters – it's basic sentence structure. When those visual cues are changed, reading becomes more difficult.

The purpose of song lyric projection is to help your community be more active in the worship experience by providing words they can clearly read. You want to do everything you can to foster legibility. It is recommended that you only use sentence case to project your worship song lyrics and leave using all caps for smaller bodies of text such as titles and headings.

For further discussion on this topic read "A Case Against All Caps for Worship Lyric Projection" by Jeff McIntosh.
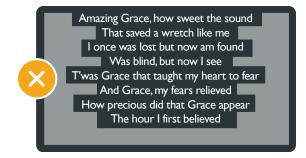
LAYOUT

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White Space

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There are many elements that help to make a great design and one that often gets overlooked is white space. Every design has white space, but not all designs have enough.

White space is the negative space between or around your elements. It is the unmarked areas of your screen such as margins, gutters, space between columns and space between lines of text. Don't be misguided by its name, white space isn't always white and in worship lyric projection it rarely will be. In most cases your white space will be black, dark-colored or neutral patterns between your text, photo and graphical elements.

White space is like breathing room for your eyes. It is the space between elements that your eyes will pass over to find all the important pieces of information like text and graphics. By increasing the white space on your screen, you will decrease the visual congestion. Having less clutter will result in more legible text and more pleasing design.

When laying out your slides, do not crowd every corner with graphics and words. Value white space in your design and use it to your advantage. White space is an effective tool in transforming a weak presentation to one that is clean and professional.

Five ways to increase white space in your design presentation are:

- Decrease the number of lines of text per slide
- Decrease your font size
- Increase your leading
- Increase your margin widths
- Remove unnecessary graphics or photo elements

Slide Margins

Slide margins are the space between the edge of your screen and the boundaries of your text area. It is always recommended that you leave room on the top, bottom, left and right sides of your text area so as to not crowd the edges of your screen. For a typical setup you want your slide margines to account for a minimum of 10 to 30 percent of your screen. A 4:3 screen will have narrower margins than a 16:9 screen, because there is less horizontal space for lines of text.

I once was lost
but now am found
Was blind, but now I see

If you routinely find that your text is hitting the edges of your margins you can try these solutions:

- Break long lines of text into two lines
- Decrease your font size
- Decrease tracking
- Use a narrower font

Once you have determined an appropriate slide margin boundary, you will want to set it as your default and keep your margins exactly the same throughout your entire presentation. Always keep the same margin width on the left side of the screen as your right side. The top and bottom of the screen should have equal margin widths as well, but in special circumstances you may have different values due to viewing obstructions that are present in your environment.

Horizontal Alignment

Horizontal alignment determines how your text is aligned from the left and right sides of your text area. The three types of horizontal alignment are left, centered and right. Whichever alignment you decide to use, make sure you are consistent throughout your presentation. Use the same horizontal alignment throughout all your worship slides unless there is a special circumstance to use an alternative.

"Design can be art. Design can be aesthetics. Design is so simple, that's why it is so complicated."

Paul Rand

Varying your slide's horizontal alignment can help signal to your community that it is time to read scripture, hear an announcement or enter into worship.

When choosing a horizontal alignment for your text, take into consideration your background image. If you have an important element on one side of your screen and not on the other, you may need to left or right justify your text so it does not overlap it.

Centered Horizontal Alignment

Centered horizontal alignment is the most popular text alignment for worship slides because it places your text in the middle of your screen and makes it the primary focal point. It is easy to read because it creates ragged edges on the left and right of the text, takes advantage of the most important area of your screen and has an appealing look to the eye.

The strengths for using centered horizontal alignment for your text are:

- Creates symmetry which symbolizes authority and truth
- Keeps your text away from the edges of the screen
- Looks great over abstract backgrounds
- Modern, clean and simple looking
- Ragged edges on left and right
- The center of every screen has the brightest and sharpest picture

Left Horizontal Alignment

Left horizontal alignment is the second most commonly used text alignment in worship lyric projection. The straight edge on the left makes it easy for readers to find the next line of text. This is a visual boundary that the eye is drawn to whenever it needs to find the first word on the next line.

The strengths of using left horizontal alignment for your text are:

- Creates a clean edge on the left and a ragged edge on the right
- Leaves room on the right side of your screen for visual elements
- Makes reading long blocks of text easier; for example, scripture, responsive reading and sermon notes
- Traditional looking

Right Horizontal Alignment

Right horizontal alignment can add a unique design twist to your slides. When used sparingly, it is a creative way to add a little variation to your presentation. Aligning text to the right is especially helpful if there is a graphical element you do not want your text to overlap with on the left. Be careful not to overuse this alignment style. Aligning text to the right makes a ragged edge on the left and has the tendency to make your lines of text more difficult to read.

The strengths of using right horizontal alignment for your text are:

- Leaves room on the left side of the screen for visual elements
- Unique and creative

Vertical Alignment
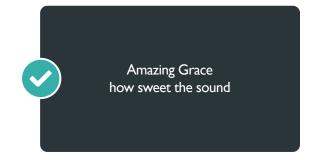
Vertical alignment determines how your text is justified from the top and bottom edges of your text area. There are three types of vertical alignment: centered, top and bottom.

Centered Vertical Alignment

Vertically centered text is the most popular alignment of worship lyrics because it makes the text the primary focal point. This alignment style leaves an equal amount of space above and below your text no matter how many lines you have. Its symmetrical look is very pleasing to the eye and is easy to read.

The strengths of using centered vertical alignment for your text are:

- Creates symmetry
- Keeps text away from the edges of the screen
- Looks great over abstract backgrounds
- The center of your screen has the brightest and sharpest picture
- Well balanced

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound
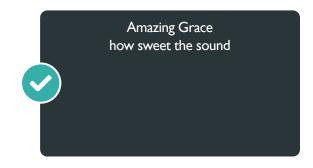
Top Vertical Alignment
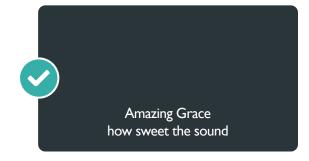
There are two common reasons why top vertical alignment is used instead of centered vertical alignment. The first is because the sight lines to the bottom portion of the screen are obstructed. This may be due to a number of reasons such as the band being in front of the screen, low hanging screens, beams and pillars in the way or any other obstructions to the field of view. If obstructions are present, be sure to determine the lowest point on your screen that the text can be presented so that everyone has a clear view.

A second common circumstance for using this alignment type is when you have a graphical element on the bottom of your slides that you do not want to cover up. Aligning your text to the top of your screen to separate your text area from your graphical elements will create clearer messages and a better design.

Bottom Vertical Alignment

Aligning your text to the bottom of your screen may be used to separate your text from graphical elements that occupy the top area of your screen. Screens using IMAG (image magnification) will commonly use a bottom vertical alignment for their text so that no important visuals like faces or hand gestures are covered up.

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound

The strengths of using bottom vertical alignment for your text are:
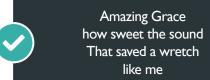
- Leaves room at the top of your screen for visual elements
- Positions text lower on your screen if obstructions are present at the top
- Works well with IMAG

Lines of Text

Do not be lazy and put an entire song on your screen at one time. Four lines of text is a balanced choice when determining how many lines should be presented on a single worship slide. Four lines is ideal because it leaves the screen uncluttered and easy for your community to find their place whether they are familiar with the song or not. Like everything else in your presentation, you want every line of text to be easy to find, clearly readable and not crowded in any way.

Two or three lines of text is also acceptable if you have less than four lines of text to present at one time. If you are using lyrics over IMAG, it is common practice to use only one or two lines of text when presenting lyrics. Fewer lines of text take up less screen real estate and make it easier for your community to find their place during times of worship. Projection operators will need to advance to the next slide more often as the number of lines of text decreases per slide.

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost
but now am found
Was blind, but now I see

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch
like me

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound

The maximum number of lines per worship lyric slide is five. Exceeding this number puts too much text on your screen at one time and makes it difficult for your community to find their place. If the lines of text are very short, then having five lines is a reasonable choice. In most cases stay within four or fewer lines of text.

The tempo of a song will also influence the number of lines you choose to present at one time. It is good practice to place more lines of text on your slides for faster songs and fewer lines of text for slower songs.

An alternative school of thought believes that presenting more lines of text on your screen at one time will help your community see the story in a song and give more time to meditate on its words. When an audience only sees small portions of a song at one time, they may be less likely to appreciate the full narrative of the song. This is something to consider when choosing how many lines of text to project per slide. For more contemplative and reflective songs you may consider increasing the number of lines of text on your screen if you think it is appropriate.

> **"The designer must think first and work later."**
>
> . . . .
>
> Will Burtin

Creating a Design Standard

Once you have finalized your design choices and settings, you will want to implement them across your entire presentation. A good practice is to write them all out and keep them on file for future reference. This is especially helpful if you have multiple people involved in creating and editing presentations and you want everyone to follow the same design specifications.

Design standards that you should record and make available as a standard for all future presentations are:

- Alignment styles
- Drop shadow values
- Font names
- Font size
- Leading and tracking values
- Line height value
- Margin values
- Maximum number of lines of text per slide
- Outline stroke widths

At the end of this handbook there is a template for you to print and use to create your own design standard (page 101).

> "Plans are of little importance, but planning is essential."
>
> Winston Churchill

Song Titles and Title Slides

It is recommended that you do not use song titles or title slides during your presentation unless your leadership has specifically requested them. Projecting the title of a song on a separate slide or at the top of your lyrics is unnecessary and distracting to your community. Titles draw eyes away from your worship lyrics which are the most important part of your presentation. They also take up screen space that can be better used for text, graphics and white space.

The use of song titles is not necessary to comply with copyright laws. Song titles, artist names and other copyright information can be presented in a much more discrete way. For more information on this topic read the section of this handbook titled Copyright Laws (page 73).

One exception where using a song title would be appropriate is when posting a hymn or song number on your screen to indicate to your community to turn to a hymn or song in a book, rather than projecting the lyrics. This is an important piece of information that needs to be communicated to your community. Remember to keep it tasteful. There is no need to make the title bold, underlined or use an excessively large font size.

Amazing Grace by John Newton

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me

Visual Silence

Visual silence is a powerful tool that removes visual distractions in an environment in order to amplify other focal points. When your community has fewer competing visuals to be stimulated by, greater focus will occur on what is still active in an environment. Think of visual silence as negative space in a real-world environment. Removing all or most distractions from your screen can help channel your community's attention elsewhere.

Don't be afraid of the dark. Black screens should not be feared, but embraced. Allowing your screens to go completely black during a worship song might be the best solution to help focus your community's attention and remove all visual distractions. Without any text or graphics to look at, your community can have an uncrowded space to enter into a reflective time to listen, meditate and pray.

Some specific times when you might consider allowing your screens to go black are:
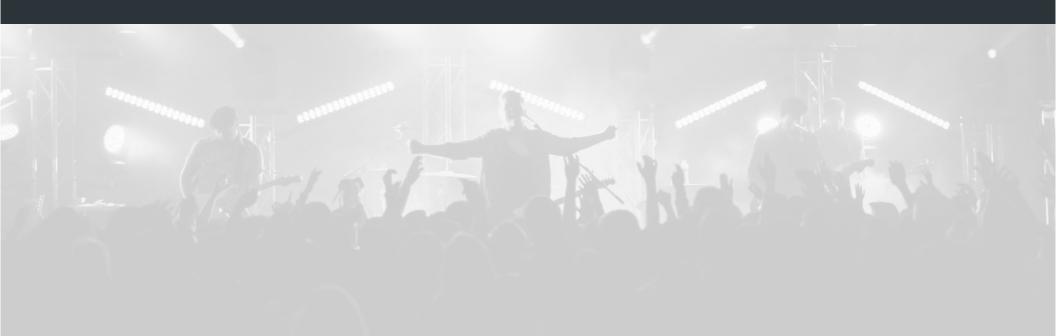
- Communion
- Instrumental music or solos
- Musical interludes and breaks in the music
- Offering
- Personal response or reflection times
- Prayer or times of meditation

> "Visual silence is also a powerful way to communicate the story of our salvation, which in its simplest form is the journey from darkness to light."
>
> Stephen Proctor

EDITING

SLIDE EDITING

Now that you have your typography and layout looking great, it is time to edit your text. Everything can look great visually, but one misspelled word will be noticed and will create a distraction for your community. That is why it is very important to check and double-check your slides for mistakes. Take time to edit your slides, because small fixes make big differences.

Having your worship leader look over your slides can also help to find hidden errors. They will easily spot a wrong slide order or an incorrect song selection. What only takes a few minutes to look over can turn a good presentation into a great one.

Be careful when copying and pasting song lyrics and scripture from other sources like websites and song sheets. They often include unwanted elements such as symbols, numbers, spaces and line breaks. Take time to clean up your new song slides after you import or paste anything into your presentation.

Line Breaks

Line breaks need to flow naturally and should break according to the musical phrasing of the song. Each line should be a complete phrase and never be half a thought. If you are unsure about choosing the best location for a line break for a particular verse, try singing the song to yourself or

> "Good design is obvious. Great design is transparent."
>
> Joe Sparano
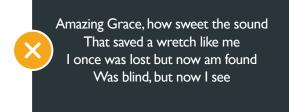
listening to its audio track to find natural breaks. If you are still having trouble choosing the best spot, ask another person or worship leader for help. Oddly placed breaks in your text disrupt the natural flow of a song and will be noticed by your community. The better the lyrics flow on your screen, the more naturally a song will be read.

The ideal situation would be to have short lines of text on your screen making it easier for your community to find their place in a song. This is especially helpful for those who may not be familiar with the songs.
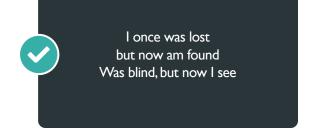
Locations where it is natural to break up a long line of text are:

- After a comma
- After a period
- Before the word "and"
- Pauses or rests in a song
- Times when the singer takes a breath

Keep an eye out for unwanted line breaks. These can automatically occur when you copy and paste lyrics from one source to another, increase your font size, change your font type, increase your font weight or change video resolutions.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind, but now I see

Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost
but now am found
Was blind, but now I see

Widows and Orphans

When a line of text is too long for the space provided, the last word on the line will get pushed to a new line with a single word. This occurrence is called an orphan and is very unappealing when it comes to slide design.

Even worse than an orphan is a widow. This is when a single word or line of text gets pushed to a new slide and leaves it widowed all by itself on the slide. Both of these situations are undesirable and need to be fixed.

Orphans and widows are easy to spot when you are on the lookout for them. One way to fix an orphan is to split a long line of text into two lines. Eliminate a widow by splitting a large block of text onto two separate slides.

Punctuation

The punctuation you choose when projecting song lyrics affects the way a line looks and how it is sung. There are a few rules of thought when it comes to punctuation in song lyrics. One is to eliminate all forms of punctuation, the second is keep only the bare essentials and the third is to keep everything that the composer of the song intended to be there. You need to decide for yourself what is best for your community and stick with it. There is no right or wrong answer, just keep your decisions consistent throughout your entire presentation. A common mistake is to jump back and forth between different punctuation practices throughout a presentation.

The most common punctuation practice is to eliminate everything that is unnecessary and only keep the bare essentials. This comes from the school of thought that you are projecting lyrics and not sentences. Much like poetry, this practice does not follow all the standard rules of punctuation found in formal writing.

Some guidelines for following this punctuation practice in worship lyric projection are:

- Commas are acceptable, mid-line if necessary.
- Keep all question marks if the lyrics are stating a question. Removing them may change the meaning of the phrase.
- Remove all exclamation marks, colons and semicolons at the end of every line.
- Remove all periods and commas at the end of every line. Line breaks are more than enough to signify new thoughts.
- Remove all unnecessary hyphens.
- Use a comma if a line begins by addressing someone's name. Example: Jesus, you are my Savior.
- Use a comma to separate multiple descriptors before a noun. Example: Morning, evening, bless His Name.
- Use a comma to separate three or more items in a list.

Managing punctuation is an art form. Use common sense and be consistent throughout your presentation. Develop your own punctuation policy that helps your community read, understand and worship. Any barriers that discourage these core values should be adjusted.

❌ Amazing Grace,
how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.

✅ Amazing Grace
how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me

Capitalization

There are a few schools of thought on what should and should not be capitalized in your presentation. Whichever rules you adhere to, make sure you are consistent with them.

The most commonly practiced rules with regards to lyric capitalization are:

- Always capitalize proper nouns such as "I", days of the week, city names and names of people.
- Always capitalize any nouns that refer to God. Example: Healer, Maker, Provider and King.
- Always capitalize the first letter of the first word on every new line of text that is a new phrase.
- Always capitalize the names and pronouns of God. Example: Jesus, Lord, Father, Holy Spirit, You, You're, Your, He, Him and His.

"When our spelling is perfect, it's invisible. But when it's flawed, it prompts strong negative associations."

Marilyn vos Savant

Spelling

Spelling mistakes that slip through the cracks during your editing process will stick out to your community when your presentation goes live. They will distract, irritate and make your presentation look unprofessional.

Spell check has its limitations and should not be relied on as your only source of proofreading. It will not pick up repeated words, repeated lines, the wrong word, bad punctuation and other editing errors. Always look over your slides and if possible have someone else look them over too. A fresh pair of eyes can quickly find mistakes that you blindly missed.

Always check and double-check your slides for spelling mistakes. This is especially important for newly typed and imported songs.

In a worst case scenario, a spelling mistake could present an idea that is theologically incorrect or even blasphemous. This is another important reason why editing and looking over your slides for mistakes is an important responsibility.

When song lyrics are retyped every week there is a greater chance of error. It is best to use a presentation software or song database to keep all your song lyrics together so that edits can be added and archived for future use.

Remember that spelling mistakes are inevitable. The key is to catch all of them before your presentation goes live in front of your community.

> "Remember that spelling mistakes are inevitable. The key is to catch all of them before your presentation goes live in front of your community."
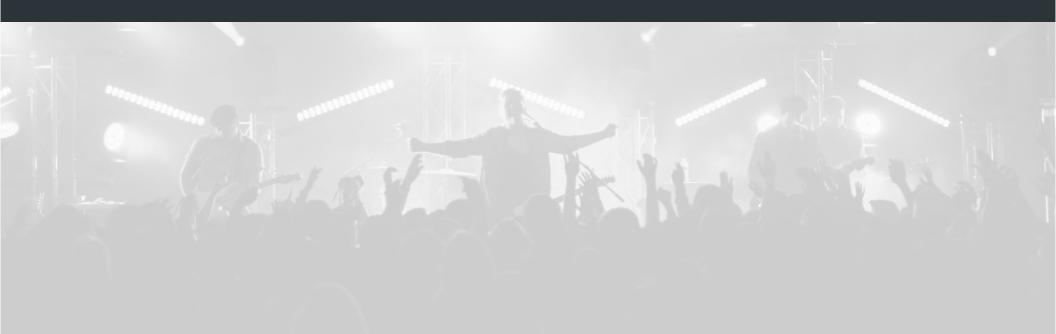
Grammar and Other Errors

When editing and proofreading your presentation you should look for grammatical mistakes and other errors. An easy error to miss is a correctly spelled word, but used in the wrong context. This is a fatal flaw of most built-in spell-checking tools. They do not understand sentence meaning, but only the spelling of words.

A few mistakes to look out for are:

- Correct spelling but incorrect word usage. Example: their, there and they're; your and you're; accept/except.
- Incorrect order of lines, verses or choruses
- Incorrectly abbreviated words. Correct examples are: "until" as "'till", "for example" as "e.g.", "that is" as "i.e.," and "et cetera" as "etc.".
- Missing lines of text
- Missing words
- Misused apostrophes
- Mixing American and British spelling together. Example: Savior/ Saviour, theater/theatre, canceled/cancelled and symbolize/ symbolise.
- Unintentionally repeated words

PRESENTING

TYPES OF MEDIA

When creating your presentation you will want to incorporate different types of media to communicate your messages and tell your stories. The main types of media that are the building blocks of your presentation are still backgrounds, motion backgrounds, countdown timers and mini movies. The following sections will explain these types of media and how they are commonly used.

Still Backgrounds

Still backgrounds are single images that do not move. They usually come in JPEG format and consist of a photograph, graphic, texture or a combination. They can be used anytime during an event to create an atmosphere, tell a story or set a mood. Most commonly, still backgrounds are used behind worship lyrics, announcements, scripture and sermon notes. The use of still backgrounds will be discussed in more detail in the Using Worship Backgrounds section ().

Motion Backgrounds

Motion backgrounds are videos consisting of multiple frames that when played together create movement on your screen. These come in a wide range of themes, colors and tempos to fit any need. Motion backgrounds are commonly used behind worship lyrics, countdown timers and announcement slides. Most professionally produced motion backgrounds will seamlessly loop when the video reaches the last frame and start from the beginning again. Another form of motion background is called a "long play". These videos are usually three to five minutes in length and display various photos or graphics over an extended period of time. These are useful pieces of media during breaks, offering times, communion and special times of worship. The use of motion backgrounds will be discussed in greater detail in the Using Worship Backgrounds section ().

Countdown Timers

Countdown timers are videos that display a numerical countdown on your screen to signal when an event is about to begin or an action will take place. These are typically three to five minutes in length and come in various themes and styles. Countdown timers are perfect for playing before a service so your community knows exactly when the service will begin. Modern worship presentation software is capable of creating digital countdown timers that can be set for any duration, with any font type and size.

If you have a countdown timer video that is longer than what you need, just position the playhead at your desired mark and play the video from there. With this method, you can use a five-minute countdown video as a three-minute countdown timer.

Mini Movies

Mini movies are videos ranging from one to six minutes in length that tell a story, introduce a topic, make an announcement or entertain your community. These videos can be played any time during a service. Mini movies are versatile pieces of media that can be highly effective in communicating your desired message.

Visit WorshipHouseMedia.com for the best selection of church mini movies created by hundreds of talented producers.

USING WORSHIP BACKGROUNDS

Worship backgrounds are any visual imagery you put behind projected worship lyrics or on any accompanying screen. Together with your worship leader, band, environment, context and community, a story can be created. The more intentional you are about the visuals you select for your screens, the stronger your story and the more powerful your theme will become.

It is easy to pick out visuals that add excitement. Worship backgrounds that shine, twinkle and move all add a lot of interest to an environment, but skill is required in choosing visuals to clearly support your message. Beauty and art is created when what is seen and heard work together to tell a story.

Visual worship preparation takes time and dedication to find the very best media to match your worship songs. At first, keep your ideas simple when pairing worship backgrounds with your lyrics. Experiment with literal, figurative and abstract imagery that fits with your songs and themes. Never try to force a background into place. Instead, look for naturally fitting visuals that work well with the music and other elements. When you cannot find an appropriate background, fall back to a black background as a default. It is better to have no worship background on your screen than to force a visual that distracts or competes for attention.

Selecting the right background is an artistic choice. If you do not have a knack for this type of work then ask for help from someone who has an eye for design. Together as a team you can decide on what is aesthetically pleasing and contextually appropriate.

Always have a plan in place when choosing your worship backgrounds. Just as the worship leader intentionally selected the songs he or she will play that day, so should you thoughtfully choose your visuals. Do everything with purpose and be intentional about every element that is displayed on your screens.

Remember, your community is not singing the backgrounds, so they should always take second stage to the lyrics. Worship backgrounds should never overpower or crowd out your text, but rather gently embrace it and work harmoniously with it.

A few ways to help reverse the problem of a background overpowering a piece of text are:

- Blur your background image.
- Crop or mask out the overpowering part(s) of your image.
- Reduce the saturation and/or brightness of your background image.
- Slow down the playback speed of your motion background or make it a still background.
- Stop using the background or wait to use it at a more appropriate time.

> **"A first-rate story is easily killed by second-rate design."**
>
> . . . .
>
> Mokokoma Mokhonoana

Still Worship Backgrounds

Still worship backgrounds are still images that are projected along or behind text. It is common to use still worship backgrounds during verses of songs to introduce a visual theme or during slower songs when visual movement is not needed. They are also perfect for traditional communities where movement on a screen would not be well received.

Textures and graphics can all be used as still worship backgrounds to add just the right amount of imagery needed to communicate your message. Photographs do have their place in visual worship projection, but you need to be careful that they do not detract too much attention from your worship lyrics. Blurring photographs and detailed imagery can help to deemphasize a photograph and reduce its distracting properties.

When a still image is left unchanged for an extended period of time it becomes like wallpaper. The image no longer gets noticed and becomes an "invisible" element in your environment. This can help build a theme that is noticed on a subconscious level. An example would be to use the same graphics or background every time your community meets. Over time, your community will no longer notice these elements and their familiarity will become another part of your visual environment.

Motion Worship Backgrounds

Using motion worship backgrounds during your event can be done well or poorly. Randomly choosing the motion backgrounds that will go behind your lyrics is a poor way of designing your community's visual experience. You are better off using no backgrounds at all than to aimlessly choose media to project.

One important question you need to ask is, are motion worship backgrounds appropriate for my community? If they are, you then need to determine the amount of animated movement your community can tolerate. When first introducing more visual movement into your events, take it slow. Introduce motion gradually so that your community has time to adjust to the change.

Besides being distracting, the continuous scrolling or tunneling movement of some backgrounds can actually make someone feel sick with vertigo. Be considerate of your community and design with them in mind. You and your team must decide what types of motion backgrounds are appropriate for worship and which ones are not. Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.

The role of slide designer is important in every church that uses video projection. They have the power to create a visual environment and tell a story that sound, light and paint cannot. On the flip side, they hold just as much power to destroy a worship experience by creating visual distractions that inhibit worship.

" Design cannot rescue failed content. "

Edward R. Trufte

Do not let motion backgrounds in worship become a crutch. Many powerful worship events have happened in the past and will happen in the future without motion backgrounds. Worshiping God should always be the focal point, not your visuals. You always want your community to be thinking, singing and meditating on the words being projected and not distracted by how interesting the backgrounds look. The measure of excellence in production is doing something great without being noticed.

The Multiscreen Movement

By Luke McElroy | @lukemcelroy

Whenever new technology arrives in our culture, our natural instinct is to implement it into our systems or processes. We find ourselves presented with an opportunity to invite foreign objects into our worship environment expectant that it will always be of benefit. However not all technology is good and not all technology is bad. The use of technology has led me down a path of exploring the role of visual worship in our services. One thing I'm sure of is that "visual worship" isn't a marketing tool to lure in the next generation; it's an opportunity to use visuals as a musical instrument in the worship of our incredibly merciful God. It's an opportunity to explore the pros and cons of technology in our worship.

There's a fine line between using technology as an entertainment element and using technology to enhance the spiritual atmosphere in a worship environment.

I'm a believer in visual worship, not for entertainment, but for the enhancement of the "God-Story" in which we are immersed. I'm also a believer in multiscreen video technology. Allowing an image to span across multiple visual surfaces (say a piece of video content spanning across two to three screens or televisions).

When we move people into a new visual environment, we have an opportunity to place them inside the story we're telling. We have a way to bond members of our community by sharing a common experience. This bond creates a horizontal connection with those in the room and a community is strengthened. However, what makes our multiscreen applications different from that of the entertainment industry is our ability to share Jesus in the midst. Adding a spiritual experience creates a vertical connection, heightening the worship experience.

Our goal with visual worship isn't just to connect, but to create an atmosphere that shows people more Jesus. It's not about likes on social media, but rather an interaction with the Holy Spirit. That's why I believe in multiscreen and triple wide video walls. It's why environmental projection can be used as another instrument in the worship band and it's why you as a visual worship leader carry a responsibility that is far greater than that of punching the space bar to advance the lyric slide.

Welcome to the multiscreen movement.

Luke is the founder of the online community TripleWide Media *and author of the ebook* The Wide Guide: A Blueprint to the Multiscreen Movement.
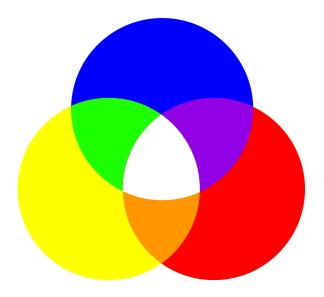
Photo by VisualWorshiper.com

USING COLOR

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When creating worship slides you need to follow the fundamental rules of art and design to deliver the best results. Great design has purpose and function. Every element should be placed for a specific reason and not at random.

How your slides are designed will have an impact on every person in your community who comes in contact with your screens. They will be reading your slides and relying on them for information. Always be intentional about the design of your slides. No matter the size of your community, all your design decisions will have an impact on the lives of people. Do your best to craft presentations that are targeted for your community and design to the highest standard possible.
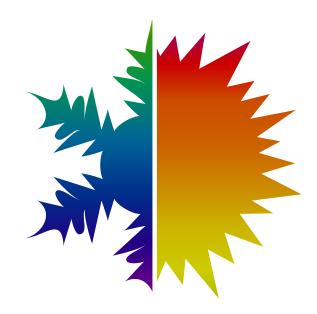
Warm and Cool Colors

The color wheel can be divided into a warm side and a cool side. Warm colors are associated with daylight and are vivid, energetic and appear to be more active. Cool colors are associated with a gray or overcast day and are calm, soothing and appear to recede. When pairing colors with your worship slides think about choosing a family of warm or cool colors to convey your message.

Warm colors include red, red-orange, orange, yellow-orange and yellow. Cool colors include green, blue-green, blue, blue-violet and violet. Colors that can either be warm or cool are yellow-green and red-violet.

Color Meaning

Every color is associated, whether strongly or loosely, with societal and cultural symbolism, emotional personal preference and meaning. Colors are a form of non-verbal communication that hold power to impact someone in extraordinary ways. Take for example a room lit with a red light. The room will "feel" warmer than a room lit with just a regular white light even though the temperature in the two rooms is exactly the same. It is truly amazing how color can affect mood, covey an emotion, invoke a physiological reaction or inspire people to take action.

Examples in your presentation may include using red colors to symbolize the blood of Christ, using the color blue to create a feeling of peace or green to represent new life in Christ. The implementation of color meaning is an advanced skill and will take time to hone. Use the list below as a reference for various colors and their commonly associated meanings and characteristics in worship and western society.

Purple

- Authority
- Creativity and mystery
- Power, nobility and independence
- Royalty and majesty
- Stability of blue and energy of red
- Warm or cool depending on hue
- Wealth, luxury and inheritance

Blue

- Calming
- Cool and cold
- Depth and stability
- Grace and peace
- Heaven
- Holy Spirit
- River of life
- Sky and water
- Trust, loyalty, wisdom and confidence

“Design is an opportunity to continue telling the story, not just to sum everything up.”

· · · · · · · · · ·

Tate Linden

Green

- Eco-friendly and natural
- Freshness
- Growth, life and new beginnings
- Harmony
- Healing, health and wellness
- Prosperity
- Revitalization and restoration
- Warm or cool depending on hue

Yellow and Gold

- Bright and lively
- Celebration
- Cheerful
- Fun and happy
- God's kingship and glory
- Optimistic
- Refining fire
- Sunny and bright
- Warm

Orange

- Combines the energy of red and the happiness of yellow
- Enthusiasm, creativity and encouragement
- Harvest and fruitfulness
- High visibility and can catch attention
- Joy and sunshine
- Not as aggressive as red
- Revival
- Warm and hot

Red

- Aggressive and bold
- Blood of Christ
- Communion
- Courage
- Emotionally intense
- Energy, strength and power
- Forgiveness and salvation
- High visibility
- Passion, desire and love
- Warm and hot

"Simplicity is about subtracting the obvious and adding the meaningful."

· · · · · · · · · ·

John Maeda

Black

- Absence of color
- Darkness and death
- Power and authority
- Quietness
- Sin and bondage
- Stillness

White

- Awakening and new life
- Holy Spirit
- Purity and beauty
- Salvation and redemption
- Surrender to God

Color Harmony
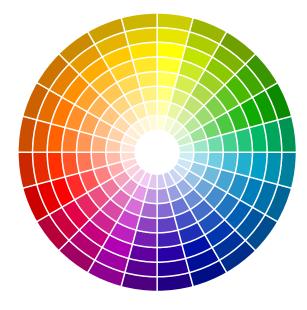
When it comes to color harmony in worship lyric projection it is best to keep your color palettes simple. The more colors used in your design, the greater the chance two or more of your colors will clash or disrupt the story being told. Always be intentional about the colors you use in worship and when communicating your message. Monochromatic color schemes, complementary color schemes and warm or cool color palettes are all easy methods to tell your story through color.

Colors that work well together:

- Black and red
- Black and yellow
- Blue and green
- Blue and yellow
- White and blue

Colors that can be problematic:

- Brown and gray
- Green and orange
- Orange and pink
- Purple and green
- Red and green

Factors to Consider

When designing with color, take into consideration your projector. Old and underpowered projectors are prone to altering the color of your image. You may find that these projectors make your image look warmer or cooler or create high contrast images with blown-out whites and lost details in the dark areas.

Ambient light in your environment might also affect the color that appears on your screens. Natural light coming through a window or colored light shining through glass can alter how your projected image appears. These are all factors to consider when determining which colors to use in your presentation and the changes needed to help balance these special conditions.

Lastly and most importantly you need to coordinate the design of your slides with the visual environment in which you are presenting. Most notably this would be in regards to your partnership with the lighting operator or visual director. The content you project on your screens needs to work well together with the lighting design in your environment and vice versa. A more cohesive message will be delivered to your community as the collaboration between these two operations becomes more united.

> "The content you project on your screens needs to work well together with the lighting design in your environment and vice versa."

VISUAL ENERGY

Feelings of quickness, speed and excitement come from images that have high levels of visual energy. Those with low levels create feelings of calmness, quietness and peace. When pairing your graphics with worship, try matching the visual energy with the rhythm of the song, intensity of the lights and feeling in the room.

High visual energy characteristics may include:

- Bright, high contrast and complementary colors
- Diagonal, vertical and intersecting lines
- Fast-moving animation
- Intricate design, fine details and rich textures
- Multiple colors, patterns and shapes
- The use of mixed mediums
- Warm colors such as red, yellow and orange

Low visual energy characteristics may include:

- Cool colors such as blue, purple, green and black
- Dark, dull and low contrast colors
- Horizontal lines and non-intersecting lines
- Monochromatic color scheme
- Slow-moving animation
- Still graphics

All visual elements in your environment need to work together to create a congruent story. Use your screens as one element in your environment to help balance the level of visual energy you desire to have in the room.

TIMING AND TRANSITIONS

The best transitions between slides are the ones no one sees. Transitions that are too slow, out of place, abrupt, too rapid or ugly will be noticed. Do the best you can to perform your slide changes at the appropriate moment so your presentation moves forward seamlessly.

For Text

To eliminate distractions and to serve your community well, your song lyrics need to be projected on the screen at least two seconds before they are sung. This is important because your community needs to know what they will be singing before they need to sing it. You never want your projected text to trail behind what is being sung. Hesitation on which slide comes next demonstrates a lack of preparation.

The moment when you switch from one song slide to another will also depend on the speed of the song. For fast-paced songs this might mean switching to the next slide before the last word or two are sung on the previous slide. This is acceptable because people naturally read ahead when words are presented to them. In those few seconds when the slide changes before the last word is sung they will remember what they just saw on the screen, sing the words and have the next lines of text ready for them.

For slow songs where there are breaks in the singing it is best to remove all song lyrics from your screens. This typically happens when there is a pause in the singing of more than three seconds between two slides. This will make your presentation look cleaner and when your lyrics do reappear on your screens, your community will be prompted to start singing again.

To anticipate the next slide change, you will need to be familiar with the worship songs for the event and be confident that all your slides are in the correct order. It is recommended that all of your slides are kept in the exact order in which they will be sung so that you can quickly move from one slide to the next in a linear order. It is also important that you practice running through your slides with the band during rehearsal times. The practice will help you become familiar with the songs and allow you to fix any problems that arise.

As a projection operator you need to be a listener and be alert at all times. Projecting the right piece of content at the right time is very important. Always stay focused during the entire time you are operating your

> "To anticipate the next slide change, you will need to be familiar with the worship songs for the event and be confident that all your slides are in the correct order."

presentation and do not be distracted by other tasks. Alertness, focus and confidence are all qualities found in a successful operator.

For Worship Backgrounds

In some presentation programs you have the ability to set the transition time for your backgrounds independently from the transition time of your foreground text. If this is an option for you, the transition time for your worship backgrounds should be set for two to five seconds in length. Determine an appropriate transition time for your slides and make it the default for your presentation.

> **"The transition time for your worship backgrounds should be set for two to five seconds in length."**

Types of Transitions

Today's presentation software programs come with a lot of extra features that can decrease the production quality of your presentation if used incorrectly. Transitions are features where keeping it simple is the best solution no matter how many fun options your software offers.

Do not be tempted to use fancy wipes or 3D transitions to move from one worship slide to the next. Instead, only use cross dissolves or straight cuts as your transition types. A cross dissolve is when one slide is slowly faded into another slide and a straight cut is when one slide transitions instantly into the next slide without any transition time between the two.

> **"Only use cross dissolves or straight cuts as your transition types."**

Any transition type other than a cross dissolve or straight cut will draw attention to the action of the transition and away from the slide content. You want the transition from one slide to the next to be so natural that no one even notices it.

Final Slides

If you are putting together a PowerPoint or Keynote presentation that is linear by nature, it is a good idea to put a black slide as the last slide in your presentation. This will ensure that you or another operator does not accidentally go past the last slide of your presentation and exit the full screen mode to reveal a program's window.

ENHANCING WORSHIP

The primary purpose of using worship backgrounds is to enhance the worship experience by emphasizing the focal point, supporting the story and uniting worshipers.

Questions to ask yourself when deciding if a particular worship background is right for a song are:

- Does the color meaning match or support the meaning of the song?
- Does the visual energy of this worship background match the tempo of the song?
- Does this worship background fit contextually into this song, the service and the community?
- Does this worship background make the lyrics difficult to read and if so, what needs to be changed to make them easy to read?
- How does the background enhance the song?

> "Thinking about design is hard, but not thinking about it can be disastrous."
>
> Ralph Caplan

COPYRIGHT LAWS

Don't Steal

You might be surprised that this topic needs to be addressed but the misuse of digital property is so pervasive in our society and it is a problem in the church as well. Stealing digital goods is no different than stealing a physical good that you would buy from a department store. Although you cannot touch or feel a digital file, you are still stealing it when you download or share a digital file that does not belong to you or does not allow you to use it in a specific way.

Stealing includes, but is not limited to, these activities:

- Sharing single-license media on multiple computers, between church sites and users.
- Ripping copyrighted videos from media websites like YouTube and Vimeo.
- Using commercial software or products without paying for them.
- Downloading commercial music from peer-to-peer networks or illegal websites.

"You shall not steal."

Exodus 20:15 NIV

Read User Agreements

End-User License Agreements (EULAs) are contracts between the vendor of a product and the end user. Everyone who sells a product or gives something away for free usually has a set of terms and conditions on how their product can be used. These come in varying lengths and will usually include an outline overview of how a product can and cannot be used. It is important that you read these agreements carefully and follow them. Ignorance is not an excuse for breaking the law.

Common breaches in EULAs are:

- Repackaging and reselling the content as your own.
- Streaming content online or making a digital copy available for others to download.
- Using personal-use products for commercial use.
- Using single-location products across multiple locations.

> "An EULA is a legal contract between the manufacturer and/or the author and the end user of an application. The EULA details how the software can and cannot be used and any restrictions that the manufacturer imposes."
>
> webopedia.com

Copyrights and Licensing

You are free to sing worship songs anytime, anywhere and you do not need to pay a fee or have permission to do so. You do however need permission from the copyright holder of most worship songs to enter, reproduce and store lyrics on your computer so you can project them on your screen. Just as you would need to purchase a license to play a song track through

speakers for your community, so must you purchase a license for the song lyrics that you are projecting on your screens.

Think of lyric projection licensing in the same way as sheet music licensing. To comply with federal copyright law, "lyric reprint" licenses are required to compensate the songwriter(s) and publisher(s) for using their products.

For more information about getting the proper licensing to project song lyrics, web-casting your musical worship set and using movie clips as sermon illustrations for your community, visit the Christian Copyright Licensing Incorporation (CCLI). This organization makes it very easy for churches to pay one licensing fee based on the size of their community and the type of usage that is taking place.

CCLI Licenses and Copyright Information

As part of the CCLI terms and agreement, you are required to include in your presentation the copyright information for all songs reproduced under the Church Copyright License. The information needs to be displayed at some point during your event and must include the following information for each song in this order:

- Song title
- Writer/composer/lyricist credit(s)
- Copyright notice
- CCLI license number

"Lord Reign In Me"
By Brenton Brown
© 1998 Vinyard Songs (UK/Eire)
CCLI License # 12345678

To comply with your CCLI terms and agreement it states, "With a print, this information is to be placed under each song. When projecting a song, it only needs to appear once with the song". Therefore put your CCLI information on the bottom of the first or last slide of each song. You can also put your CCLI information on every slide, but this method would be a distraction to your community and unnecessary to comply with the terms and agreements of this copyright license service provider.

Try to pick the least invasive way to post your CCLI information to your community. Use a small font size and choose a font color that doesn't compete with your main text.

EMERGENCY PLAN

Things do not always go as planned and we need to have contingency plans in place to adapt to an emergency or change direction. It could be a burned out projector bulb, power outage, computer error, hard drive failure, software crash, user error or leadership blunder that can derail your presentation and bring it to a halt. This is why you need to have a discussion with your team and build an emergency plan. Come up with some worst-case scenarios and have a plan in place for how you would deal with each of them. The more prepared you are, the better off you will be in case of an emergency.

"When you want to know how things really work, study them when they're coming apart."

William Gibson

MANAGING YOUR MEDIA

Is your library of videos, still graphics and announcement bumpers in your church presentation software a mess? Chances are, like most churches, your growing library of church media could be better organized. Whether you are using ProPresenter, MediaShout, EasyWorship or another popular church presentation software, your media library needs to be managed in order to stay organized. This will require time, commitment and teaching everyone involved how to follow your media library guidelines.

Organize Your Hard Drive

The first thing to do is to organize all the media on your hard drive. This means hunting down all your digital media assets, moving them into one designated folder and using a structure of sub-folders to organize. Store all of this important data on an internal drive other than your system drive or on a high-speed external drive. Besides being fast, your data will be protected if your system drive crashes.

Clean Up Your Media

Once you have all your media in one place, this is the perfect time to go through it and do some thorough cleaning.

> "The way to find a needle in a haystack is to sit down."
>
> Beryl Markham

Some actions to take as you complete this process are:

- Delete duplicate media
- Delete low-resolution, oddly formatted and poorly designed media
- Delete or archive outdated media
- Rename media using logical naming conventions

Root Folder Organization

On your hard drive, create a single folder for all of your media. Make it easy to access and find.

Next, create a hierarchy of folders. At the root, sort all of your media by format such as HD, SD and triple-wide resolutions. If you are only in an HD environment you might consider archiving all your SD content in another location on your hard drive.

Another important folder in your root directory should be labeled "Sunday Service" or something else that is more applicable. It is common to have media that is only used for a particular weekend like an announcement slide, photo or PowerPoint presentation. This will keep your media library tidy if all this data is stored in one place. Within this folder create sub-folders for each weekend service and use this naming format to keep your files easy to find: YYYY-MM-DD.

One additional folder to keep handy is for bundles and packs. Church Motion Graphics and other producers sell packages of media that include countdown timers, still graphics and motion backgrounds. Rather than

> "Use this naming format to keep your files easy to find: YYYY-MM-DD."

dividing all of these pieces into different folders, it is more useful to keep these thematic sets together.

HD, SD and Triple-wide Folders

Within each "HD", "SD" and "Triple-wide" folder, keep the identically named sub-folders: "Announcements", "Countdown Timers", "Long Plays", "Motion Backgrounds", "Mini Movies", "New", "Seasonal" and "Still Backgrounds". This will help keep your media easy to find whenever switching from 4:3, 16:9 or triple-wide projection setups.

The "New" folder is a great place to temporarily store media when you don't have any time to sort and organize it. Be warned though that this folder can easily get unorganized if not maintained on a regular basis.

The "Seasonal" folder is also unique, because it holds sub-folders for different seasons and celebrations like Mother's Day and Thanksgiving. For media-heavy seasons like Christmas and Easter you might consider adding additional folders to organize the various types of content like "Christmas Countdown Timers" and "Christmas Announcements". Another option is to add the year to the folder name for further clarity.
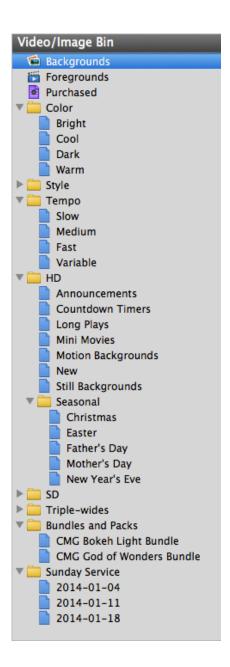
Organize Your Software Library

Now that you have all your media organized on your hard drive, it is ready to be imported and organized in your presentation software.

In most cases you want to set up your folders with the same organization structure as your hard drive. Create the same folders for "HD", "SD" and "Triple-wide" that have sub-folders for "Announcements", "Countdown Timers", "Long Plays", "Motion Backgrounds", "Mini Movies", "New", "Still Backgrounds" and "Seasonal". Also make sure you include other special folders like: "Bundles and Packs" and "Sunday Service".

Themed Folders

Additional playlist folders can be created based on themes like color, tempo, church media producer and style to help you easily find the piece of media you are looking for. Feel free to create as many of these folders as necessary to help you with your media selection process. Do remember though that simplicity from the start will help you to maintain your library of media over time.

CONCLUSION

Everyone involved in the presentation process is important. Projecting slides makes everyone feel welcome and comfortable by providing visual prompts to what song is being sung, what scripture is being read and what points are important.

Always display your worship lyrics and projected content to the highest possible standard. Take time in preparing and editing your slides and "serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people" (Ephesians 6:7 NIV). A rushed job will show and mistakes will be made when you are too busy to check and test your presentation.

The purpose of worship lyric projection is always to enhance the worship experience and should never be a source of distraction. In worship, everything on your screen is important and you are responsible for every pixel that is projected.

Keep learning and expanding your knowledge of church media and visual worship. Worship lyric projection is a process that you improve at with the more experience you gain. Try experimenting with new techniques and media during worship practices. Do not be afraid to ask for help and seek the advice from others more experienced than yourself.

Thank you for serving your community and desiring to serve them better. You have an important part in building the Kingdom of God.

"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people,"

Ephesians 6:7 NIV

MORE POINTS TO CONSIDER

Always rehearse with the band by testing every slide and piece of media before they are used in a live presentation. Catch any problems during the rehearsal and fix them before the event begins. Do not wing it and project content on the fly.

- Avoid repeating lines. Keep your lyrics simple. Why have two lines when one would do just fine?
- Avoid using any solid color background other than black.
- Change or add media to your library every month to eliminate monotony.
- Learn from your mistakes.
- Leave lyrics off the screen whenever possible. If no lyrics are being sung, then they should not be on the screen.
- Make sure your video countdown timers are set to play only once and are not on repeat.
- Never use animated transitions for song slides.
- Use the screen as a visual aid and not as a notebook. Only project the most important points of a sermon or announcement.
- When using motion worship backgrounds make sure your computer is powerful enough to play them. Stuttering videos are never desirable and should be avoided.

Photo by Elmer Escobar

- When using presentations with only two lines of text on your screen at a time, make sure your song is in sequence and has been thoroughly checked. Operational errors can easily occur in this setup, because slides are changing so rapidly.
- Your community should never see a mouse cursor, program-window frame or video player projected on a screen.

VOICES FROM THE INDUSTRY

· ·

Kendall Conner

· ·

thecreativepastor.com | @kendallconner

There was a time in the Church when pretty much anything projected during a service was considered progressive and beneficial, but that's simply not the case anymore. We're a more visual, media-driven people than ever before. Media is everywhere and therefore average Joes now have standards. The common man may not be able to put into words what right looks like, but he can sure tell you when something looks wrong. And sloppy, unprofessional or just plain ugly aren't exactly the ways

that you want people describing your church. This brings an interesting challenge to those of us who have taken on the task of leading people in "visual worship."

In the same way that it would be painfully obvious to your congregation if your pianist, guitarist or singers walked onto the stage unprepared, people are going to notice when you haven't done your part too. There is an art to playing music that is not only friendly to the ear, but that truly leads people into worship. It requires practice. It requires prayer. Church media is so much more than tapping a spacebar on Sunday morning. You have the opportunity to capture the imagination of a crowd and point their attention towards Christ. Imagery should be beautiful. Information should be clear. And it should all work in harmony with the other elements of the service to communicate one message.

Approach church media prayerfully. Ask God to use you in your services to do more than simply project lyrics, but to create distraction-free environments of life change. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and keep your clicks graceful. Pray that you'll keep a heart of service and an attitude that inspires others to do the same. Ask for quick recovery from glitches, bugs and butterfingers – because they will come. Tell Him that all of your preparation, hard work and labor are for His honor and for His name to be lifted up. Mean it.

Jason Dyba

· ·

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Congratulations! You have successfully read through (or skimmed through, at least) an entire novella on the art of excellent slide and text formatting. By some universal edict, you've now entered into a fringe society/club/cult that is constantly critiquing people's kerning and color harmony. No longer will you be able to drive down small-town American streets without questioning why so many businesses have Papyrus in their logo or why those YouTube ads don't check their grammar before showing it to millions of people. You've been "enlightened".

To most people, it's all a bit silly to think that anyone should care this much about slide design. And really, I think we all know it's not really about the slides, the text or your "visual worship" library. It's about people. It's about creating environments that remove as many distractions as possible and create a clear invitation to experience God. As Andy Stanley so often says, "We can't make people fall in love with Jesus... but we can set up the date." We can't woo a human heart to Christ, but we can make sure the mood lighting is there and the dinner menu looks slick.

I really like the way that The Message paraphrases 1 Corinthians 9:19: "Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people." Again, the reason we care about technological precision and

artistic beauty is because we know these mediums can tangibly influence people. And we want to make our very best effort to influence them towards the cross.

It's okay to be picky. Be precise. Be adamant about excellence. But more than anything else, be passionate about inviting people to Jesus.

Camron Ware

visualworshiper.com | @visualworshiper

Visuals are everywhere in our culture and woven into our daily lives, and we are literally surrounded with media. The problem is that most of those visuals are not God-glorifying. I truly believe that we as the Church have the means, and the responsibility, to not only use visuals to bring glory to Him, but do so in a creative and fresh way. God created us as visual creatures and gave each of us unique gifts in order to worship Him, but I find it interesting how the Church today is usually following the visual culture instead of leading. It wasn't always this way — the Church used to be REALLY good at using visuals in our buildings and worship services, and I think we are just now seeing the pendulum swing the other way back to the use of culture-leading visual art in the Church.

Think about a cathedral you might have seen a picture of or even stood in — the building itself is a palette full of color, imagery, emotion and story. The architecture itself was art, the ceiling was a canvas and the walls were both

literal and figurative windows to God's creation. Tapestries, paint, mosaics and of course stained glass were used to show stories of the Bible and glorify God.

Using video projection, we can now use Environmental Projection to tie directly back to those cathedrals, and I often refer to it as "postmodern stained glass." It surrounds the congregation and engages us in worship in a subtle and beautiful way. There is something indescribably powerful about being with fellow believers in a room worshiping, and being surrounded with imagery and story that help point to Him.

Dan Stevers

....

danstevers.com | @danstevers

The following is a confessional but it's my hope that you as a creative will identify with my struggles.

The Apostle Paul put it very well when he said, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do" (Romans 7:15 NIV). I get this statement — all too well at times. You see, as an artist I create because God put that longing inside of me; it's who God made me to be. God created the universe out of sheer delight and He put that desire in me to create as a way of reflecting my Creator. But sin twists that desire into a means of gaining an advantage for myself. So in effect, there are two competing forces within me: the force that seeks to live out my purpose

and glorify God and the force that seeks to glorify myself. These two competing sides of me have two distinct ways of expressing themselves in my life but I want to talk about them in relation to my years spent as a church video producer.

In my early years of working at a church, the ego-driven side often got the better of me and led me to make art that drew the focus towards myself. Even though I loved God and called Him my savior I also still looked for validation from people, and so I sought it through my work. I created art hoping that people would say how amazing my work was, how much they enjoyed it and how talented I was. Even though on the surface my art was always talking about Jesus, my main goal was to impress – in other words, the ultimate goal was me.

Working for a church made it easy to convince myself that my self-serving interests were anything but – after all I'm working for a church, I'm doing God's work, therefore I am in the right. I was able to say that it was all about Jesus – I think that I even believed that was true, but really I was seeking adulation and approval for my work. Jesus had a lot to say to these kinds of people, specifically Pharisees, who were involved in ministry but were completely self-serving and dead on the inside and who Jesus not-so-gently called white-washed tombs – nice looking on the outside but rotting on the inside. Something needed to change.

Thankfully I have an infinitely patient and gracious God and as I grew closer to Him, I allowed Him to chisel off the desires of my self-serving nature, "the old man" as Paul calls it, and the new redeemed self became more

alive than ever. This new way of operating stressed communicating over impressing and it meant I was creating so that God would be glorified, not myself. It caused me to want to take myself out of the equation and it meant stripping off that which was getting in the way of the Gospel's message. (Often those things were the sort of eye candy that was sure to get attention, both for the video and myself.) And I was caught off guard as people began to connect with God through my work in profound ways that I never expected.

The contrast between the outcomes of the two modes of operating was stark. When I was concerned with making something that impressed, the end result would often be a nice and visually tantalizing presentation that would do little more than entertain. It couldn't do any more than entertain because that's all I am capable of in my own strength. I can't change a life. But when my goal was to communicate Jesus, the responses would be less about the video (or myself) and more about God. People would comment about God's goodness and how He spoke to them through a particular video rather than the craftsmanship of my work or the impressiveness of my skill set. Now it's important to note that I am not saying that a God-glorifying work of art can't be excellent – they certainly can and that's what I've devoted my life to – but what I'm addressing is about an orientation of the heart. It was about Who I was hoping would be glorified through my work.

So here's where it's time to look inside and ask yourself the question: Who are you creating for? For God and His glory or for your own? Here

are some questions to ask yourself that might bring some of these hidden motives to light: Are you disappointed when someone makes a comment about God to you after a Sunday morning service and doesn't mention anything about the quality of your work on display? Do you become discouraged when you aren't recognized by your bosses/coworkers or by the congregation? Does criticism of your work utterly devastate you? Do you fantasize about moving up to a bigger church where you'll finally have the audience and receive the credit you deserve?

I still struggle with a need for approval and a need to be validated as an artist (I think most artists do) but I am living into my new identity, which is that through Christ I have already been validated. I am already accepted and there's nothing I've done to earn it and there's nothing I can do to lose it. The sinful, self-serving part of myself, though crucified with Christ, still rears his head from time to time like some sort of zombie, and I still need God's grace to stick him back in the ground so I remain in Christ. This sinful part of me continually wants to feed me the lie that I am not accepted based on Christ's merits and that I need to earn it for myself. If I'm honest I know that I'll be dealing with his lies my whole life. But I've already seen over the years that it gets a little easier to deal with him as the Holy Spirit continues to renew my heart and I abide in Christ.

Our choice as artists and communicators is to determine which self we are going let guide our lives as well as our art. Is it going to be about impressing people and seeking our own glory or is it about communicating Jesus and longing to see God glorified? Because it can't be about both.

Your work will never give life on its own, not to yourself or to others. And it will always let you down because it won't provide the validation that you crave. But you can point people to the One who is able and willing to rescue and change a life.

You are not your work. Because you're already accepted through Christ. And that is very, very good news.

Kevin O'Brien

journeyboxmedia.com | @1kevob

I love making people cry with my mini movies. It's not out of ego, or a desire to manipulate others' emotions. It's because I know that the times I cry are the times when I'm the most vulnerable. It's when I remember that I'm human.

When I cry, I am connecting with my truest self, be it fear or hope or sorrow or joy. Those times are most likely the times that the biggest changes happen in my life. I think that's why it's so important for us to know that Jesus wept. He was human. He hurt. He suffered loss.

So if my mini movie can help a viewer connect some raw emotion with God's story, that is a definite win for me. That's why I make mini movies – to move people to live better stories.

In our world of branding, slick messaging and social media strategies, it's easy for us to package the story of God into a simple A+B=C kind of message. But the truth is that life is messy. And full of hurt. And struggle. Life is dirt and mud and blood and mystery and loss and tears. And the best part is that God steps down and meets us in the hurt.

That is what I try to connect with in each of my mini movies. A three-minute mini movie cannot answer all the questions. It probably cannot answer a single question. But it can ask the question and allow the viewer to realize he or she is not alone in his or her doubts.

I believe that visual media has the power to soften hearts. To awaken the dead. To bring tears to the hardened. And to move people to live a better story.

Luke McElroy

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The best picture for the role that visual worship plays in our worship services is salt. Visual worship is a seasoning, it's not the main dish or even a baked potato. Because video, in and of itself has no nutritional value (spiritually speaking). It's just pixels, a collection of digital noise. However when we add that digital noise to our meat or our side dishes we have an opportunity to enhance.

Too much salt and something becomes bitter; too little and it's tasteless. We know this to be the case with our food, but we forget this with our worship services. Salt does three primary things: it flavors, it heals and it preserves.

First, when you add salt to something it has the ability to flavor the object you're adding it to. More specifically salt is actually designed to enhance the flavor of something. If you're making chocolate chip cookies, one of the ingredients is salt. However chocolate chip cookies aren't salty, are they? No, but the salt you add actually enhances the taste of the chocolate, thus causing the cookie to taste better. The same is true in our visual worship. When we add the right amount of media, art, creativity and environment, it has the ability to enhance the flavor of the Gospel and intersect with the lives of our community.

Second, salt is a healing agent. Before modern medicine, tribal groups would use salt to clean out a wound or cut. It's designed to clean out the bad and allow the body to heal itself. I'm a believer that art is the language of the invisible, that it has a way of communicating to us unlike most forms of communication. It is a vehicle that God uses absent of people, systems and organizational structure. Visual worship is rare in the way it can heal wounds bruised or broken by the church systems. It's purity in its approach is unlike many other elements in our corporate worship.

Lastly, salt is a preservation agent. If you were to add it to a piece of meat, it would actually remove the moisture inside in order to prevent mold and fungus. It keeps the object in its original form and allows you to enjoy it a few days or months later. Visual worship accomplishes a similar objective. It

is a preservation agent for the Gospel. Jesus gave us the great commission asking us to tell His story to every people group all across the world. That's a timeless story, but we're called to tell it in a timely manner. Enter visual worship. This is our way to preserve the story of the Gospel and tell it in a way that invites people in a manner relevant to the current generation.

There's a community gathering that is asking these big questions about how visuals impact our modern services; a community I'm honored to be a part of and serve alongside. This is the heartbeat behind SALT Nashville, the visual worship conference, and why our team has leveraged everything to ask deeper questions. Let's add more visual worship to our services and be more salt to our communities.

To learn more about this community and join us in the next gathering make sure to visit saltnashville.com.

Matt Walden
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I'm fairly new to the term "visual worship" but I've been fortunate enough to grow up with it my entire life. Being Catholic, I grew up with the use of images, art and color married together with the liturgical calendar to convey a unified message for the congregation. Even the use of something as simple as incense was meant to tell the story that like smoke rising to the heavens, our prayers will ascend to the Father. Every part of the Mass –

every sight, sound, smell, taste and touch was carefully planned to inspire us to "look up" and join a story much greater than ourselves, and I was mesmerized by it.

It's interesting to note that in the early days of the church, the majority of people couldn't read. As a result, the church hired the very best artists to tell the story of salvation history through stained glass, mosaics, paintings and statues. The walls and windows of churches and cathedrals were transformed from structures that simply held up the roof and let in light to visual masterpieces that even to this day capture the imaginations of all who enter. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel shares nine scenes from the book of Genesis, with the creation of Adam as the focal point. It was meticulously planned to tell a story and it took Michelangelo four years to paint.

In the modern era, we have the opportunity to tell stories in a way that Michelangelo, Da Vinci and Gaudi never could. Instead of working for several years to tell a single story, we can tell a new story every week with every song or even every chorus. When prayerfully thought out and executed, we can provide visuals that illustrate the message being proclaimed and help people enter into an experience on a whole new level. It must be said though, that we also have the ability to distract, frustrate and hinder an experience.

If we want to help the experience, we must take it upon ourselves to seek out and understand the vision our pastors and worship leaders have for each service. We need to know where they hope to take people and how

they plan on getting there. This will take time to master and we will make mistakes, but we can never begin to craft visuals that speak into that vision until we know what the vision is. Through collaboration, hard work and a lot of prayer, hopefully a new renaissance is upon us, one where as a Church we can say goodbye to the "PowerPoint person" and hello to the "visual worship leader".

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For more resources read, "The Big List of Church Media Resources for Creative Ministries" by Jeff McIntosh.

SPECIAL THANKS
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Font name and weight style: . . . .

Font size: . . . .

Leading and tracking values: . . . .

Line height value: . . . .

Drop shadow values: . . . .

Outline stroke values: . . . .

Alignment style: . . . .

Margin values: . . . .

Maximum number of lines of text: . . . .

Notes