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**Using a Screen in Worship?: A Review of Jason Moore and Len Wilson, *Design Matters: Creating Powerful Imagery for Worship***

Moore, Jason, and Len Wilson. (2006). [\*Design matters: Creating powerful imagery for Worship.\*](#) Nashville: Abingdon Press. 176 pp. \$23.50

Over the past twenty years screens have become a common and important aspect of worship. Almost every church makes some use of a projector and screen for parts of the worship and, in many, the screen never goes dark. That's the way it should be according to the authors of *Design Matters*.

In their 2006 publication Jason Moore and Len Wilson suggest that the quality of screen usage can seriously affect the way worship elements are perceived:

Poor utilization of the screen can overshadow the most meticulously planned dramas, music, and messages--no matter how much effort is given to these other elements of worship. Weak visuals stick out like a giant sore thumb. They can do more harm than good, resulting in worship that is not only unimproved from the old way but is often worse. (p. 16)

The authors believe screens are not just a fad, but are here to stay: "Digital technology in worship, and the use of image, is a permanent shift in the culture of the church" (p. 18). Moore and Wilson want to convince us that effective use of image will lead to growth and transformation in the culture of the church and in individual lives. For this to happen, those who operate church media must realize that the screen is a visual medium, not a textual medium. In order to make the transition in our thinking, we must learn the "Rules of Image."

The mistake most churches make in using their screens is that they treat the screen as a piece of paper and merely project onto the screen the same things they would print on paper. Quite a different medium, digital images require a different thought process. The authors explain that digital images are laid out in pixels and that photograph and other images imported from print media must be treated with care when appropriated for use on the screen. They offer an important piece of advice to church media designers: NEVER USE CLIP ART!

The bulk of the book comprises an explanation of these rules of image or principles of design. The first principle of design covers creativity and metaphor. "A tangible way to relate a story, thought, or idea" (p. 24), metaphor makes the message easier to understand; it serves as the glue that makes the message stick; and it was Jesus' model for public ministry. The authors emphasize that metaphors must be quickly and easily understood and should require no more than a four- to seven-word phrase to make their meaning clear.

Moore and Wilson recommend that those who design screens for church watch TV and movies in order to find references. The use of references allows designers to “acquire a voice in the current culture.” Such usage is not plagiarism but allows designers of church media to base their designs on current trends and speak clearly to a contemporary audience. With the use of reference, a designer can improve the quality of his or her work by merely becoming a student of the culture.

Composition, treatment, and texture provide subject matter for which the authors give guidelines and show examples. While discussing composition, they state: “The worship designer strives for communication of the Gospel through image, which is at the heart of the use of images – not just the eye candy or abstract, meaningless ‘art’ but a medium to communicate the Gospel” (pp. 56-57).

In an interesting discussion of color, Moore and Wilson insist that the use of color can “add emotional depth to imagery” (p. 62). Choosing the right colors will express the emotion intended to accompany the image. They note the difference between the classic primary colors of red, yellow, and blue; the color mode RGB (red, green, and blue), which is the color mode of the human eye; and the color scheme for printed media CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black). Screen graphics use RGB; printed graphics use CMYK. When transferring print graphics to the screen, even the color undergoes a slight change.

Following a discussion of the use of light and shadow, the treatment of letters on the screen receives attention. According to Moore and Wilson, letters on the screen are not simply letters, but they are graphics too. Choosing and using fonts properly can enhance or destroy an otherwise excellent graphic. Too often, they say, designers spend a great deal of time producing a beautiful graphic and then hastily paste on a graphic that detracts from the message. They suggest the use of only two types of fonts for a given worship service: (1) a display or headline font; and (2) a body or copy font. Use the display font for all headings, including those in the sermon outline. Use the body font for all text including scripture and lyrics. They strongly suggest avoiding the classic fonts of print media such as Arial, Helvetica, Times New Roman, Courier, etc., when creating digital graphics.

The book closes with detailed instructions for organizing a graphic and how to continue growing in design capability. In almost every chapter one finds web addresses where free graphics, pictures, and fonts maybe accessed. Also, most chapters contain a list of guidelines for that aspect of design. One excellent feature of the book is the inclusion of a “Terms to Learn” section at the end of each chapter.

I highly recommend this book for pastors, music leaders, and church media personnel. In fact, anyone involved in planning worship that makes use of screen and digital technology can benefit from reading it. This short book (only 114 pages) sports an attractive cover and includes a DVD with a summary of the seven design principles, full color images of the demo slides in the text, how-to demos for creating your own images in Adobe Photoshop®, and a demo film. It actually took longer to view the DVD than to read the text! The authors jointly own and operate Midnight Oil Productions and regularly conduct training sessions for church media specialists. Their

website, [www.midnightoilproductions.com](http://www.midnightoilproductions.com), also provides tutorials for producing graphics and offers many finished graphics for purchase and downloading.