

## How to write visually for desktop publishing

by Yvon Prehn

We are living in a time when many successful communications are visual. Television, movies, computer games, music videos, CDs,— we are bombarded with powerful visual images.

It's important to realize that in doing desktop publishing, that you don't need to rely strictly on the visual images you put on the page to create pictures in your reader's minds. Our imaginations are marvelous translators and words alone can create images as powerful as any video game.

*How we do this is critical to the success of our publications. We can place words on a page, but unless we create a clear and vivid picture in our reader's mind, our message isn't communicated. A selection of words alone doesn't communicate. Our words must contain the raw materials to create a visual image that give our emotions and will something to respond to.*

Let me illustrate what I mean. Consider below the two different ways of describing the same ministry:

*Description #1—"Prison Fellowship has this wonderful pen pal program that ministers to people in jail."*

What do you see in your mind's eye from this description? Probably not much.

*Description #2— "Mark had been in prison for two years. During that time he had never had a visitor, never received a letter or phone call. His first contact with anyone outside the prison came the day he got his first letter from Jeff, his Prison Fellowship pen pal."*

Do you see Mark? Of course you do. We all see a different Mark, but each one of us sees a lonely man in his cell opening a letter.

You see the person in the second description because it contains concrete words that create visual images in your mind. General words like "wonderful" used in the first description call up completely different images in each person's mind. When you say "wonderful" to me, I think hot fudge sundae, not prison ministry.

Jesus was a master at telling specific concrete stories that have challenged us for 2,000 years. For example, he didn't relate a theological essay on how God's love is part of his immutable character and is eternally consistent. He sat his disciples down one day and told them this story, "A man had two sons and one day one of them said, "Dad, I want the money now. . . ."

Hearing those words we all see the story of the prodigal son and we see the Father's love as he waits for and welcomes him home.

Use the same technique when you write about your ministry. If your church needs youth workers, a notice in the bulletin may or may not generate much interest. But if you do a profile of a 50-year-old couple who the kids describe as "the coolest adults they know, " that might encourage some participation from people who hadn't considered it before.

The Bible is filled with the stories of the experiences of individuals. When we think about the Bible what first comes to mind is not the doctrine of the atonement or the theology of spiritual gifts. We think of Moses and Ruth, of Mary and Peter. God used human lives to illustrate his messages and our DTP publications need to do the same.