

HOW SHALL THEY HEAR?

WHAT IF? – by Terry Wood

Still not sure if you should take the plunge and caption for your church? You are probably thinking **what if** somebody says “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, or the pastor speaks 300 w.p.m., or they start quoting from, of all things, the Bible?

Amy Caronongan, RPR, from Trafalgar, Indiana, e-mailed us with several questions and Terry Wood, RPR, of our captioning team answers them.

1) *“Here’s the scenario. A really strange word like “Troas” (2 Cor. 2:12) comes up. I know it’s not in my dictionary. I was told that I need to write this word out letter by letter; it should come up as “Troas,” not “T-R-O-A-S,” on the screen. What do you do when you run across those weird words? If you do spell it out, how do you differentiate between dashes and having a normal word appear on the screen? I hope that makes some kind of sense.”*

Makes perfect sense. In the software we use, we have “fingerspelling” -- and many software packages now include this -- so I just fingerspell the word letter by letter. For an excellent article on fingerspelling, go to the NCRA web site and read “Fingerspelling Made Simple” by Janis T. Young.

Maybe check your software to see if you can turn off the automatic hyphen function. The software we use does not automatically stitch. Actually, since it is specifically used for captioning purposes, you would need to put in specific strokes for the hyphens to get them (or develop a specific outline for each letter of the alphabet with an adjoining hyphen). It’s just a function of captioning: You need to fingerspell far more often than mimic the spelling of a word.

Having given you this info, let me warn you that this is more difficult than it seems -- at least for me it was. You have to get used to stopping that automatic "write" response, and start thinking, "Ah, yes -- definitely not in my dictionary. And that would be spelled...", all the while retaining the rest of the sentence and deciding how to spell this word. Sometimes the words are totally foreign to me and I just give it my best shot, in the heat of the moment so to speak. Often they are not totally foreign to my ear, like Gethsemane, but still I stop dead on the spelling. And when I do ... on to the next question:

2) *"Do you get absolutely, no doubt about it, verbatim, every single last and final word that is said in the sermon? Do you skip an "unimportant" small sentence? Do you skip a few words? I feel myself getting farther and farther behind and can't imagine how I will get caught up and I LOSE IT. How do you get those fast talkers?????!!!!!"*

OH, yeah! Just love those fast talkers -- and we have our share of what I would call "fast prayers." I try to be creative and, yes, when I have to, leave out the unimportant parts. Those would be, for example, the fourth or fifth "oh Lord" in the sixth sentence of a prayer that has many, many references to the Lord. Or, taking the example above of being stopped dead on a spelling, I just try to summarize and pick it up again. Hey, it happens.

3) *"Do you quote the Biblical material when they are reading?"*

Not usually, because -- lucky us -- the guy beside us controls a computer with all those quotes pre-programmed in (yup, he does his homework!), and his screen is shown on the main screens when appropriate. So that info is taken care of. I just blank

the screen when those portions come up. HOWEVER -- there's always one of those, isn't there? -- often someone will decide to quote from the Bible off the top of their head (thankfully, not usually our pastor -- he knows better!) and then you just hold on and do your best. Also, put in a stroke for "~eth" for all those terms that arise and are definitely NOT in your dictionary. See Monette Benoit's book "The Universal Religions, Ethics, and Philosophy Handbook for Reporters and Captioners" for a list of many of these words.

By the way, that guy beside us also has all the songs on his computer -- oops, almost all the songs. He certainly has all those they have decided beforehand that the congregation will sing. That means we don't have to "write" those words. When we have a soloist or duet (or other singing ensemble -- you get the drift), they will have the words of their song photocopied for us and in front of us before the church service starts. These songs we do write -- with really cute musical notes I might add (compliments of the software).

4) *"Do you get the Biblical references and those kinds of things from the pastor before the message? If yes, what things do you ask for?"*

Well, I've just discussed about the Biblical passages and the songs. We also ask for a draft of the pastor's sermon. He provides one, one-half hour before "showtime." This gives us that half hour, plus another 15 to 20 minutes at the beginning of the service while hymns and songs are being sung to skim through and input globals into our dictionary to prepare for the sermon. Using these minutes at the beginning of the service can be very helpful -- or you can use this time to put yourself into a real panic. The choice is yours.

You can only do what you can do -- and be as well prepared as you have time for. I have written church services with my three-year-old daughter trying to lie across my lap while I write. I have written with four minutes -- three -- two (you can fill in the rest) until the service starts with our coordinator on holidays and no captions on my screen -- and no clues popping into my head about how to get those captions to my screen, or any SCREEN! There was even one colossal event in front of tons of people, with fingers and heart fluttering trying to write Robert Schuller on a Jumbotron in a hockey stadium after three and a half hours of preliminaries -- and throughout He was there to get me through. (and the rest of the captioning team were a BIG help too!)

Remember why you wanted to do this. My "job" while captioning at the church is to make sure Pastor Dan's message is heard by those that can't hear what he's saying -- in the best form I can put that in.

If you need any further help, I'd be more than happy to assist you. I know there are thousands of niggley little jolts of "incompetence" surging through your mind with every sermon, but that's true for every one of us. It's what drives us to do the next sermon, and the next, and the next.... Chin up, and keep those fingers moving!

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OUTLINES: The following were submitted by Mark Kislingbury, _____, of _____, Texas.

Jesus Christ - SKWR-BG
Jerusalem - SKWRERS
epistle - PEUFL
messiah - SPHAOEU
glory - TKPWHROER
Holy Spirit - H-S

Holy Ghost - H-*G
Israel - SRAOEL (veal = SRAO*EL)
Israeli - SRAEL
scripture - SKREURPT
Nehemiah - TPHAOEPL
proverb - PRO*FRB