

Design of Educational Playing Cards Featuring Biblical Characters as a Visual Learning Tool for Children

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Keywords:

educational card game; children's learning media; Biblical figures; design thinking

Abstract

Religious education plays a crucial role in shaping children's character and moral development from an early age, particularly through stories of Biblical figures that convey values such as obedience, love, courage, honesty, and faith in God. However, children's reading interest remains relatively low, while most religious learning media are still presented in text-based formats that are less engaging. This creates challenges in delivering these values effectively. This study aims to design an interactive and engaging educational card game based on Biblical stories for children aged 5–10 years using the Design Thinking method. The process includes the stages of empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The result of this study is an educational card game design that is expected to enhance children's learning interest and facilitate their understanding of the values conveyed in Biblical stories. These findings imply that game-based visual learning media can serve as an effective alternative to text-based methods in children's religious education.

INTRODUCTION

Religious education has an important role in shaping the character and morals of children from an early age (Irpan & Sain, 2024; Rodiyah et al., 2023; M. E. Sari et al., 2023; Wenas & Verana, 2024). Through the stories of Bible characters, children can learn about life values such as obedience, love, courage, honesty and faith in God. These values can be the foundation in shaping children's personalities and characters to have a responsible personality, and have a positive social attitude.

However, in today's digital era, children's interest in reading is declining. According to UNESCO data quoted through secondary study reports, "the reading interest of the Indonesian people is very low, which is only about 0.001%", meaning that out of every 1,000 people only one person is classified as active and has a high interest in reading. On the other hand, the results of the National Literacy Index Survey show that the public's interest in reading as a whole has increased in 2024 compared to the previous year. A survey by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that by 2024 only about 10% of Indonesians will be able to who have a habit of reading (Ekawati et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2024; H. Sari & Firman, 2025; Sihombing et al., 2025).

Lifestyle changes in the current digital era cause children to be more interested in visual and interactive media, such as digital games, videos, or animation-based applications, so conventional books are often considered less attractive (Kucirkova et al., 2021; Radesky et al., 2023). This condition poses challenges for parents, teachers, and learning media developers in maintaining children's interest in reading while effectively conveying moral and religious

values (Geurts et al., 2021). Meanwhile, most of the children's spiritual learning media on the market today is still presented in the form of long texts and static images (van der Merwe, 2020). This condition tends to make children quickly feel bored and less interested in reading or understanding the content of the story (Xie, 2021; Kucirkova et al., 2021). Therefore, with the application of an engaging visual approach and the right interactive elements, learning about Bible characters can be a more enjoyable and meaningful experience (van der Merwe, 2020; Alhamad et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have explored the use of visual and interactive learning media for children. Novitasari & Puspa (2022) designed an illustrated book as an educational medium for children equipped with illustrations and found that visual elements significantly increased children's reading interest and comprehension. Cloke (2023), referring to Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience, highlighted that learning through direct and purposeful experience, including game-based interaction, yields higher retention rates compared to passive reading. Moore (1989) identified three types of interaction in distance education learner-content, learner-instructor, and learner-learner which are also relevant in designing interactive learning media for children. Piaget & Inhelder (1969) in their theory of cognitive development stated that children aged 5–10 years are at the concrete operational stage, where they more easily understand information through visual approaches and direct activities rather than abstract text.

Previous studies have also addressed the application of Design Thinking in educational media development. Brown (2009) established Design Thinking as a human-centered problem-solving approach applicable to product and service innovation, including educational tools. However, research specifically applying the Design Thinking method to design educational playing cards based on Biblical character stories for children is still relatively limited. Most existing learning media in the field of children's religious education remain text-heavy and lack interactive elements that actively engage children in the learning process.

Seeing these conditions, a research gap exists in the limited availability of educational playing card media that combine visual, narrative, and participatory elements specifically designed to convey Biblical character values to children aged 5–10 years. While illustrated books and digital applications have been developed, the format of physical playing cards that integrate storytelling, interactive questions, and game mechanics for religious education remains underexplored. The novelty of this research lies in the application of the Design Thinking method to design a comprehensive educational card game system that not only presents Biblical character illustrations but also incorporates interactive question cards, power cards, and a structured game rule system to create an engaging, participatory learning experience centered on Christian values.

Educational learning media based on the values of biblical figures that are professionally designed with a *Design Thinking approach* are still relatively limited. Therefore, it is necessary to develop educational and interactive learning media that is user-centered to support the growth of literacy as well as the formation of children's character and faith from an early age.

With this educational playing card of biblical characters, it is hoped that children will not only know and know the stories of biblical characters in an informative way, but also be able to understand the meaning of the stories conveyed and emulate the Christian values contained in them. In addition, this media is expected to create a more enjoyable, interesting, and meaningful learning experience for children.

Based on the background described above, the problems in this design are formulated into several main concerns. First, this design seeks to identify the obstacles faced by children in understanding the stories and values contained in the stories of Bible characters. Second, this design examines the effectiveness of applying visual and interactive elements to educational playing cards in increasing children's reading interest and active participation in learning about Bible characters. Third, this design also aims to understand children's responses to the learning media prototype that has been developed.

The purpose of this design is to create visual learning media that can help children understand the values contained in the stories of biblical characters in a fun and engaging way. In addition, this design aims to test the effectiveness of interactive learning media on children's level of understanding of Bible stories by comparing the test group and the control group. This design also seeks to analyze the responses of users, namely children, parents, and teachers, toward the developed interactive design.

This design is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this design contributes to the development of visual communication design science, especially in the application of interactive design as a learning medium for children based on Christian values. It also contributes to the development of religious education, particularly in relation to learning methods that use interactive media for children. Furthermore, this design can add insight and references regarding the use of educational playing cards as an effective learning medium in instilling Christian values.

Practically, this design provides benefits for several parties. For children, the designed media offers a more enjoyable, engaging, and interactive learning experience, helping them understand the stories and values of biblical characters more deeply. For teachers and educators, this media can serve as an effective and attractive alternative learning tool in teaching children the stories and values of biblical characters. For parents, this design can support the religious education process at home through media that actively and creatively involves children. For media developers, this design can provide inspiration in creating interactive learning media that harmoniously combines narratives, illustrations, and interactive elements in one medium.

To ensure that this design remains focused and directed, several problem limitations are established. The main media developed in this design is educational playing cards for children. The educational playing cards are focused on the use of visual and interactive elements to increase children's reading interest and engagement. The Bible characters used in this design are limited to several specific figures that are relevant to the learning of character and moral values, such as Abraham, David, and Esther. In addition, this design focuses on narrative aspects, illustrations, interactive elements, and their application in the learning process, rather than conducting an in-depth psychological evaluation of children.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research and design used the Design Thinking method as a framework for product development. According to Brown (2009), Design Thinking is a *human-centered problem-solving* approach, carried out iteratively through five stages: *empathize*, *define*, *ideate*, *prototype*, and *test*. This method consists of five stages as follows:

Empathize Stage.

The users in this study consisted of children aged 5-10 years old as the main users, as well as parents and Sunday school teachers as learning companions. The number of respondents involved at this stage is 20-25 respondents (3-5 children aged 5-10 years, as well as 10-20 parents and Sunday school teachers).

The research sample was taken using *the purposive sampling technique*, which is the selection of samples based on certain criteria that are in accordance with the research objectives. The sample selection criteria included children who actively participated in Sunday school, parents and Sunday school teachers who were involved in the child's learning process.

Data collection methods used:

1. Observation of children when using learning media.
2. The data survey was conducted using a questionnaire in the form of a form filled out by parents and Sunday school teachers.

The results of the empathy stage are used as a basis for formulating problems and user needs to be solved.

Define Stage.

At this stage, the data obtained from the empathy stage is formulated into a problem statement. The formulation of the problem in this study includes:

1. Children need learning media that is visual, interesting, and easy to understand.
2. Children need a more interactive learning experience, not just passive reading.

Ideate Stage (Idea Development).

This stage focuses on the development of various alternative visual and interactive solutions. The techniques used include:

1. Brainstorming.
2. Initial sketching.
3. An exploration of illustration styles and interactive learning media formats.

The goal of this stage is to find the best concept that is able to answer the formulation of the problem.

Prototype Stage.

The initial prototype was made based on the results of the idea. *Prototypes* include:

1. Sketch a learning card.
2. Design the display of the learning cards.
3. Illustration of biblical characters.

Test Stage.

The trial stage was carried out to determine the effectiveness and user response to the prototype. The trials were conducted on children, parents and Sunday school teachers with observations focusing on material readability, visual response, storytelling ability, and suitability of the material with biblical values.

The test results obtained are the basis for improving the design to achieve more optimal results.

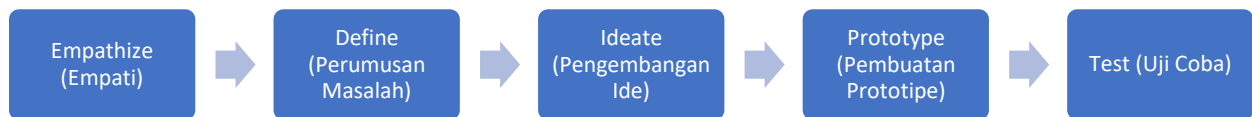


Figure 1. Design Thinking Method Flowchart

Source: Adapted from Brown (2009), visualized by the author (2026)

The choice of *the Design Thinking* method in this design is because this method is relevant to the theory of Visual Communication Design (DKV) which emphasizes user-centered *design*, as well as paying attention to visual communication aspects to user experience, so that the resulting visual media is not only aesthetically attractive, but also effective in conveying learning messages.

Research Instruments.

The research instruments used in this study were in the form of observation sheets and questionnaires (survey forms). The assessment is focused on several aspects, namely:

1. The visual appeal of learning media.
2. The level of interaction and involvement of the child.
3. Media skills help children understand Bible stories and values.

Success Indicators.

Success indicators in this study include:

1. Children are able to understand the stories and values of the Bible that are conveyed.
2. Learning media is considered suitable for use as an interactive learning facility.

Validation Method.

The validation method used in this research and design is *User Experience Rating*. The subjects in the validation consisted of children aged 5-10 years old as the main users, and parents and Sunday school teachers as learning companions.

Qualitative Data Analysis.

Miles and Huberman (1994) presented an interactive model in this study, which consists of three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. The final results of this stage are then used as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the final results of the learning media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Application of Design Thinking Methods.

The research and design of this learning media used *the Design Thinking* method as the main method used in design. Research on the use of *the Design Thinking method* in designing educational playing cards of biblical characters for children is still relatively limited as the basis for the selection of this method.

The stages of *Design Thinking* applied in this study include: (1) *Empathize*, (2) *Define*,

(3) *Ideate*, (4) *Prototype*, and (5) *Test* (Brown, 2008). The *Empathize* and *Define* stages are carried out in the pre-design phase through observation and questionnaires to understand user needs. The *Ideate* and *Prototype* stages are carried out in the design phase by producing visual concepts and media prototypes. Furthermore, the *Test* stage is carried out in the post-design phase through tests to users.

Pre-Design Stage.

Based on the background and theoretical foundation, the goal of this research is to create educational playing cards that can help children understand the values contained in the stories of biblical characters in a fun way. To achieve this goal, the researcher will conduct direct observation of children aged 5-10 years as the main users, as well as conduct a survey through questionnaires filled out by parents and Sunday school teachers.

The pre-design stage aims to identify user needs, as well as formulate the basis for designing learning media. At this stage, the researcher conducted direct observations of children aged 5-10 years, as well as distributed questionnaires to parents and Sunday school teachers.

The questionnaire was compiled using a Likert scale of 1-5, with a range of answers from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". This instrument was used to measure respondents' perception of the effectiveness of game-based learning media.

The main focus at this stage is on identifying the need for the designed media to enhance the child's interest in learning, as well as the child's understanding of the values contained in the biblical story.

Media kartu bermain edukatif lebih sesuai dengan karakteristik anak usia 5-10 tahun dibandingkan media berbasis teks. [Salin diagram](#)
20 jawaban

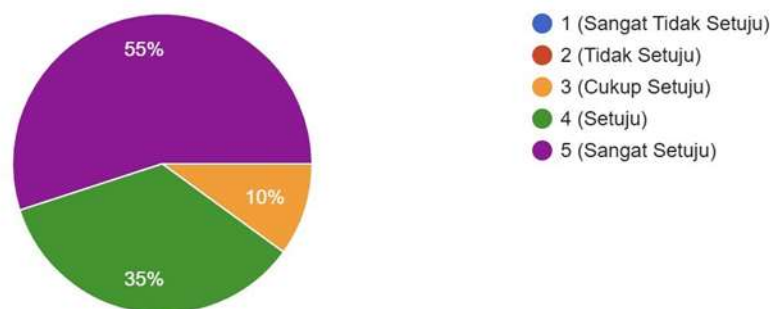


Figure 2. Diagram Kuesioner 1

Source: Questionnaire data processing, author's documentation (2026)

Based on Figure 2, the majority of respondents (11 out of 20 respondents) stated that educational playing card learning media is more in accordance with children's characteristics compared to text-based learning media. This is in line with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development which states that children aged 5-10 years are at a concrete operational stage, where children are more likely to understand information through visual approaches and direct activities (Piaget, 1972). Thus, game-based media is considered more effective in increasing children's understanding of learning materials.

Pembelajaran yang disertai dengan pertanyaan akan membantu anak lebih mudah memahami dan mengingat isi cerita dengan lebih baik.

 Salin diagram

20 jawaban

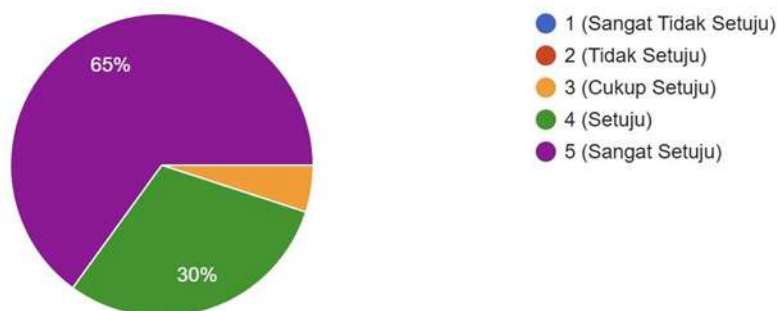


Figure 3. Diagram Kuesioner 2

Source: Questionnaire data processing, author's documentation (2026)

Furthermore, based on Figure 3, the majority of respondents (13 out of 20 respondents) strongly agreed that learning media accompanied by interactive questions can help children understand and remember the content of stories.

These findings show that learning media with the integration of elements of games and interactive questions not only increases child engagement, but also strengthens the cognitive process in understanding the values contained in the stories of biblical characters.

Overall, the results of the pre-design stage show that playing card-based learning media with an interactive approach is a solution that suits the characteristics and needs of users.

Planning stage.

The Design Stage is the stage of developing design solutions based on the results of user needs analysis. This stage begins with the development of ideas through a brainstorming process to formulate solutions that can be generated from this design. This stage is then continued by exploring visual styles and formats in learning media. Followed by making an initial sketch as a form of visualization of the design concept.

1. Development of Educational Play Card Ideas.

The development of ideas is carried out through *a brainstorming process* to produce effective and interesting learning media concepts. The media designed is in the form of educational playing cards that contain illustrations of Bible characters, short stories, and interactive activities.

The playing card media was chosen as the medium that was designed because it was easy to use, flexible, and allowed children to learn while playing. Card designs are made simple and more colorful to attract children to learn and play through educational playing card learning media.



Figure 4. Reference Format Playing Card Design

Source: Author's documentation (2026)

2. Visual Style Exploration.

The exploration of visual style is carried out taking into account the characteristics of the biblical characters as well as their suitability with the target user, namely children. The characters appointed in this plan include Abraham, David, and Esther.

Character visualization is designed with a simple and expressive illustration approach to make it easier for children to recognize the character. This approach is in line with the principles of visual communication design for children, which emphasizes simplicity of form, bright colors, and communicative expression.

Abraham is referred to as the "father of the faithful" (Ref. Rom. 4:16), an elderly figure depicted with visual features such as a beard and white hair. Abraham's appearance was designed as a wanderer dressed in a long robe, a belt, a head covering, and carrying a staff. This visualization aims to portray Abraham's life as an obedient and faithful person following God's call in his life's journey.

David is described as a courageous and faithful young man. David is depicted wearing a shepherd's pouch and holding a slingshot, which shows his courage in facing Goliath (Ref. 1 Samuel 17:40). These traits were chosen to help children recognize David as a figure who has physical limitations but has the courage to step up and believe in God.

Esther is described as a queen who lives in the palace. Esther's visual character is depicted with the appearance of a graceful and neat palace dress to illustrate her status as a queen. This performance was intended to demonstrate the values of Esther's courage, wisdom, and faithfulness in carrying out her call to save her people (Ref. Esther 4:14).

3. Color Selection.

The choice of color in the design of this educational playing card is based on the principle of color psychology that is adapted to the characteristics of each biblical character. Apart from being an aesthetic element, the use of color also serves as a means to strengthen meaning, character, and help children recognize and remember characters.

Abraham used the predominance of the dark blue color. The dominance use of dark blue inspired by the night sky, symbolizes God's promise through the stars as well as Abraham's

faith and trust in God's promise.

David used the predominance of light blue and green. The color selection of David's character describes the situation as he fights Goliath. The light blue color symbolizes David's calmness and trust in God, while the green color symbolizes David's growth and courage in the face of challenges.

Ester uses a predominantly golden yellow color. The choice of golden yellow symbolizes Esther's glory, courage, and honor as a queen. This color also reflects Esther's important role as a brave queen who was used by God to save her people.

4. Visual Design Concepts.

The design process begins with designing the characters of the predetermined Bible characters, Abraham, David, and Esther. The characters are made according to the values in the Bible as the basis for character design. Accompanied by the selection of colors on each card that is adjusted to the characteristics of each character.

Visual design not only focuses on the aesthetic aspects and appeal of children, but is also designed to make it easier for children to understand the content of the story and the values contained in it. Therefore, visual elements such as illustrations, colors, typography, and layout arrangements are made simple and not excessive so that children can more easily understand the information contained on the card.



Figure 5. Early Sketch of the Character



Figure 6. Digital Sketch of Characters

Source: Author's documentation (2026)

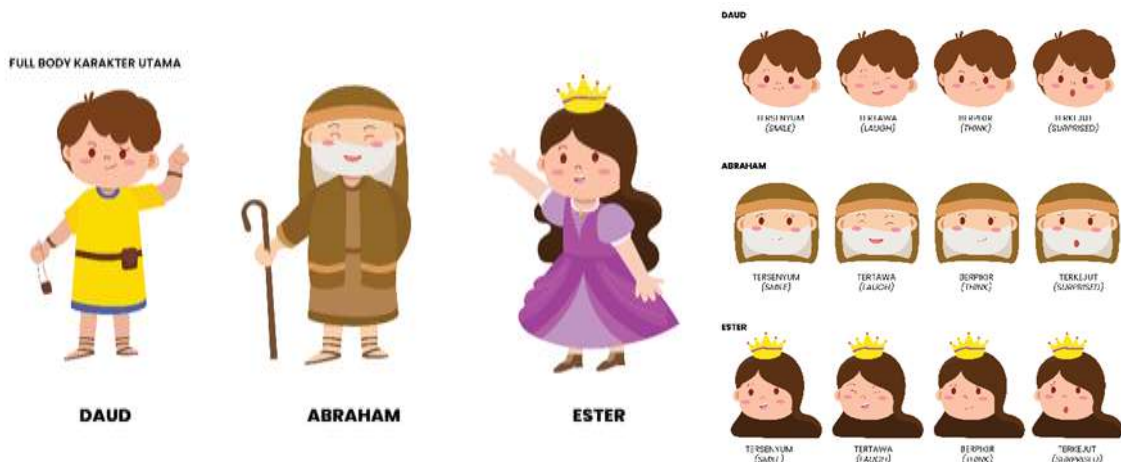


Figure 7. Early Prototype of the Character

Source: Author's documentation (2026)

5. Game Card Display Design.

Front Cover of Game Cards.

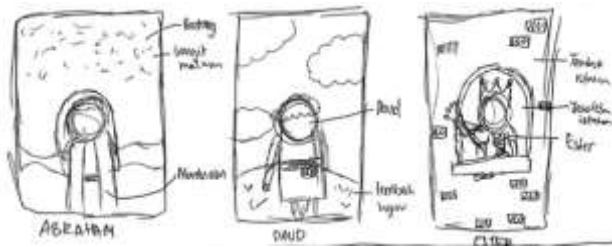


Figure 11. Initial Sketch of the Front View Sketch (Cover) Playing Cards.

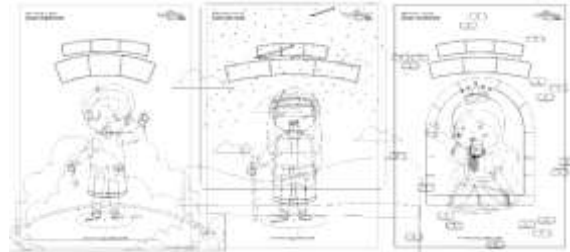


Figure 12. Front View Digital Sketch (Cover) Playing Cards.

Source: Author's documentation (2026)



Figure 13. Early prototype of the front cover of the game card.

Source: Author's documentation (2026)

Game Card Contents View.



Figure 14. Initial prototype of the game card contents display.

Source: Author's documentation (2026)

6. Learning Systems and Game Rules.

Learning System

This educational playing card is designed as an interactive learning medium that helps children understand the stories of biblical characters through the process of play. The learning system is carried out using questions and interaction between players so that children not only gain knowledge about the content of the Bible story, but also understand and get to know the values contained in it in an active and fun way.

Game Rules

This educational playing card consists of 20 game cards divided into 12 question cards, 5 power cards, 2 *score* cards for companions or moderators, and 1 game guide card. This game is designed to be played by 2-6 players accompanied by 1 companion or moderator who is in charge of guiding the course of the game and recording player points.

Before the game starts, the question cards and the power cards are combined into one, then the cards are stirred and placed in a closed position in the middle of the game table. After that, the players determine the order of the turns to play in a clockwise spin, and each player is only allowed to take one card on each turn.

When the game starts, the first player takes one card and checks the type of cards obtained. If the card drawn is a question card, the player must answer the question contained in the card. If the answer is correct, the player will earn points according to the number of points shown on the card. However, if the player cannot answer, then no points are earned and the question will be given to the player on the next turn. If the question is not answered until the last turn, the card will be placed at the very bottom and the game continues by taking a new card.

If a player gets a power card, then that player will get a special ability that can be used on the next turn when answering a question. Power cards consist of a *Double Point* Card that is used to double the correct answer points, a *Pass* Card that gives the player the opportunity to throw a question to the next player, and a *Help* card that allows the player to ask for a single clue from a companion or moderator. Once the power cards are taken, the game's turn is immediately resumed to the player of the next turn.

The game ends when all the cards have been played or the game time has ended according to the rules specified by the moderator. The player with the highest number of points is declared the winner in the game.

Post-Planning Stage.

The post-design stage is carried out through trials to users to evaluate the effectiveness of the designed media.

The trial was carried out on March 22, 2026 involving 12 respondents, consisting of 9 children aged 5-10 years and 3 Sunday school teachers. This activity was carried out in one of the churches in Medan.



Figure 15. Educational Play Card Trial Documentation

Source: Author's documentation (2026)

1. Test Results

The results of the trial showed that the educational playing card media received a positive response from users.

- From the visual aspect, respondents stated that the card design is attractive and easy to recognize.
- From the aspect of understanding, children find it easier to understand stories and moral values conveyed through card media.
- From the aspect of interaction, this media is able to increase children's involvement and enthusiasm in the learning process.

One of the child respondents stated that the media used was "exciting and fun because you can play while learning". Meanwhile, the Sunday school teacher stated that the language used in the cards was easy for children to understand.

The results of the trial showed that the media was designed in accordance with the characteristics of the child and was able to increase the interest in learning in children. The use of the language used is clear and easy for children to understand. The material presented is also able to attract interest in learning, as well as help children understand the values contained in the stories of Bible characters.

The obstacle faced during the trial was the confusion of children when they first saw and held the playing cards. However, this obstacle was overcome by an explanation of the rules of the game given by the moderator or Sunday school teacher who led the game.

CONCLUSION

This research produced learning media in the form of educational playing cards of biblical characters designed using *the Design Thinking method*. Based on all the stages carried out, it can be concluded that the designed media shows effectiveness in increasing the interest and understanding of children aged 5-10 years. At the pre-design stage, the results of the questionnaire showed that the majority of respondents (11 out of 20 respondents) strongly agreed that game-based learning media is more suitable for children's characteristics than text-based media. In addition, as many as 13 respondents stated that the use of interactive questions helps children understand and remember the content of the story. At the design stage, the media is developed through visual exploration, color selection based on color psychology, and character design that is tailored to the values of the Bible store. The results of the design resulted in a prototype card that was visually appealing and communicative for children. In the post-design stage, a trial of 12 respondents showed that educational playing card media was able to increase children's enthusiasm, involvement, and understanding of the values contained in the stories of biblical characters. Thus, this research makes an academic contribution to the development of visual communication designs based on children's education.

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