

The Studio

EPISODE // STAGE PRESENCE IN WORSHIP

Worship leaders should spend time thinking about stage presence, because they lead worship through singing and the spoken word. It might sound a little unusual to talk about ‘stage presence’ when thinking about worship – you might even think it sounds “un-Christian”. But, think about it for a minute. Your goal as a worship leader is to help people focus their attention on God. If you feel awkward, unprepared or don’t look comfortable on stage, what will their attention be drawn to? Exactly – to you, not God.

No matter what you do in worship, having good stage presence means presenting yourself in such a way that people can focus on the meaning of what you are doing, not who you are. This is true whether you are praying, reading scripture, singing or playing an instrument, or leading the congregation in any other act of worship.

Want to improve your stage presence? Here are a few basic tips:

- ✦ **Have good posture.** Stand up straight and distribute your weight evenly on both feet. Try not to slouch to one side, sway back and forth, or cross your arms. These things make you look nervous and uncomfortable. Standing tall not only helps you look better - it helps you sing and play better, too. But, don’t think that having good posture means that you have to just stand still. Balanced posture will actually enable you to more freely reflect the meaning of the words you want to convey. The more freely you express meaning with your posture, the more free your congregation will feel to do the same.
- ✦ **Make eye contact with the congregation.** No matter what you’re doing, be sure you look at everyone. This includes people in the very back rows as well as those down front. Everyone feels included when you look to the back of the room. And, if you are a musician, keep your eyes open to invite the congregation into worship. As one who studies theatre, here’s my pet peeve: worship leaders who close their eyes. Closed eyes cut you off from the congregation. To worshipers, it feels like you have stopped leading, built a wall, and entered your own little world of worship. In reality, you need to be inviting everyone in the room to participate in worship with you.
- ✦ **If you are speaking, use an expressive voice that clearly communicates what you’re saying.** Don’t overdo it, but avoid speaking in a disengaged, monotone voice. Think through what you want to say ahead of time, make some notes, and practice. If you do that, you won’t suddenly find yourself scrambling for words or babbling, endlessly trying to make your point. Don’t let speaking or singing with a microphone distract you. Practice with the mic before worship so your sound technician can set the volume level for your voice. Adjust the mic to your height before you speak, not while you speak. If you are holding it, make sure it is close to your mouth. And, whether you use a mic or not, speak confidently and pronounce words more clearly than you would in everyday conversation. The bigger your space, the more you need to be mindful of this.

- ✦ **If you mess up, keep going. Let's be honest: we all make mistakes.** There's no avoiding them! But, mistakes are less distracting if you don't call attention to them. Do what you need to do to recover, then keep going without laughing or saying "oops!" or apologizing. If you prepare well, you'll be able to think on your feet and keep going.
- ✦ **Finally, relax and be yourself.** Whether you are a super-outgoing person or a more introspective type, be who God made you to be. Your congregation will treasure your genuineness and honesty. Actively seek God in all that you do, and know God will work through you, enabling you to use your unique gifts for God's glory.