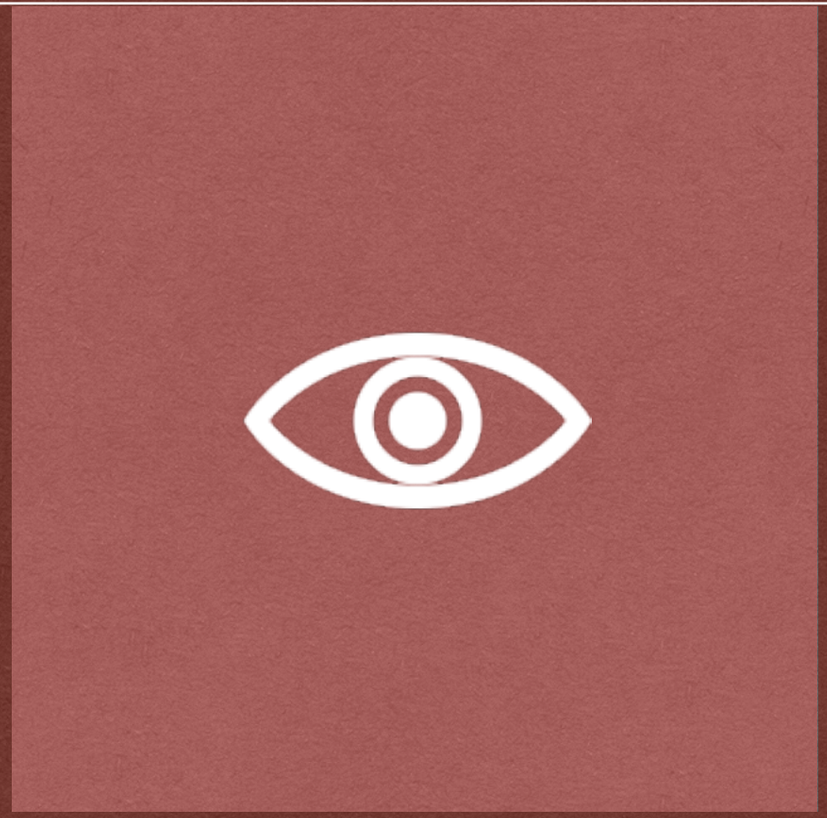
THE
ESSENTIALS
IN WORSHIP
TOOLKIT



4 HANDY TIPS
ON EYE CONTACT AND BODY POSTURE IN WORSHIP LEADING

worshiptraining

INTRODUCTION

Do eye contact and body posture matter in worship leading?

Try an experiment.

Have a friend (or friends) sit with you in a room.

First, close your eyes, and begin to talk to them. Ask them afterward how they felt about your eyes being closed while you spoke. Second, open your eyes and talk again. This time, stare at everyone with wide eyes (try to do it without blinking), and ask them how this makes them feel. Third (yes; we're not done yet) talk to the friend or friends, but stare at one object, or one person, for the entire time. Finally, attempt to look very tense, distracted and rigid as you talk to them.

How does this make them feel? Their words may sum up the unspoken experience that many congregations go through every Sunday morning. Our eyes and body communicate with others – even if both we and they don't perceive it to be happening.

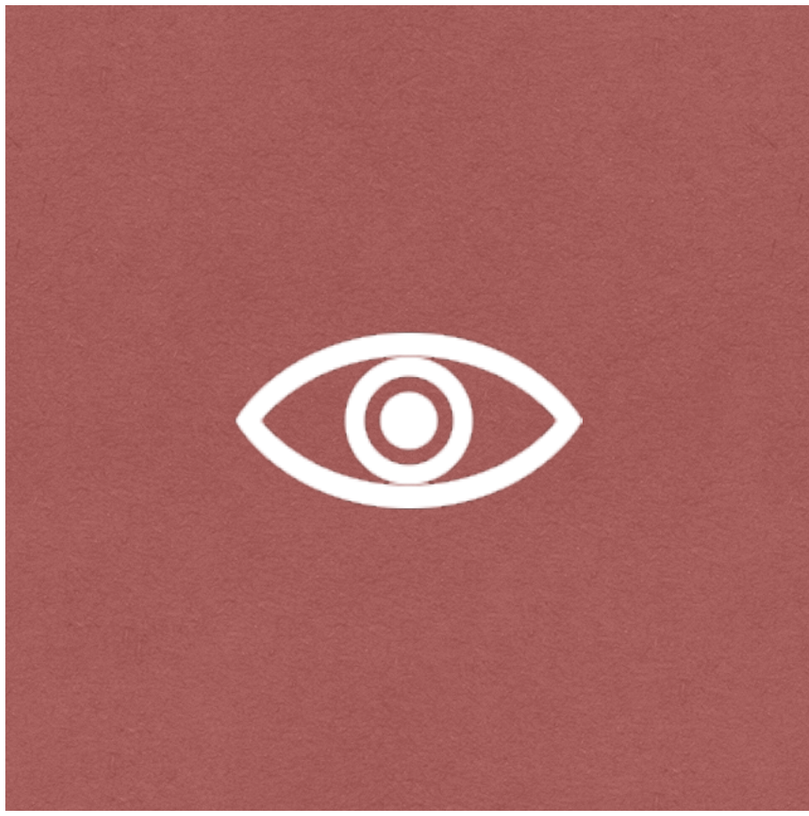
INTRODUCTION

1. Eyes open.

2. Eyes closed.

3. Staring at “safes.”

4. Relaxed but engaged.



TIP 1 - EYES OPEN

Eyes open.

When our eyes are open in a worship set, we are communicating that we are:

1) Confident,

2) Connected, and

3) Comfortable.

Worshippers pick up on these subtle signals and find themselves free to feel the same way about what is going on with us together. When we scan the room with open eyes, we are saying things like “I see what we are doing together as important, and I see you as part of this. This is a meaningful activity. I’m not afraid of you, and you don’t need to be afraid of me. I am comfortable. I am at ease. All is well. We are a community.”

TIP 2 - EYES CLOSED

Eyes closed.

When our eyes are closed in a worship set, we are communicating that we are:

1) Engaging with God,

2) Enjoying the musical and spiritual experience, and

3) Encouraged by the Spirit of God among us.

Worshippers pick up on these signals, and then often feel comfortable closing their own eyes, disengaging from the words in front of them, and enjoying the moment. When we close our eyes, we are subtly saying things like “This is a special moment. I am sensing God’s presence near. We are lingering together and listening to God. I am enjoying this music. I am encouraged by the Spirit within. The words and music are less important than us touching the hem of Jesus’ garment. The band and I are comfortable playing right now. God is here to meet with you, and with us.”

TIP 3 – STARING AT "SAFES"

Staring at "safes."

We all have a natural tendency, when in front of a group of people (large or small), to find points of visual contact that make us feel restful and psychologically non-distracted.

Sometimes, leaders stare at their music or music stand. Sometimes, leaders stare at one safe person in the congregation – the entire set. Both "stare games" can be very distracting to those in the room with us. While staring at safes can provide helpful, momentary relief from the inner dynamics going on within, they can disorient those who might feel as though you are disconnected from the room – and from them.

Identify your "safes," and begin to take measures to find other safe spots in the room that are more engaging as you lead. For example, look at multiple people during that set at different points in the room. It will make it feel like you are looking around the room, rather than starting at one person.

Do what it takes to be comfortable yourself, and then to make people feel included.

TIP 4 - RELAXED BUT ENGAGED

Relaxed, but engaged.

When it is clear that a leader is relaxed, connected, and comfortable with their physical position being in front of you, it tends to make you feel comfortable as well.

When someone in the congregation feels relaxed, connected, and comfortable they are willing to be more involved, vulnerable, engaged, and even expressive in their worship. If your community perceives that you would rather be nowhere else than in this room, worshipping together with them, they will follow respond by giving you their attention and participation (to some degree).

You can look relaxed while still following your set plan as you engage with your community through body posture and eye contact.

ACTION STEPS

> Summary.

Eye contact and body language play a huge part in effectively guiding our congregation in worship. Worshippers pick up on these unspoken signals, and allow these indicators to guide their own worship experience.

As you grow and become more comfortable in front of a congregation, identify those “safes” that allow you to connect with the whole room without staring solely at your music. Finally, embrace that your relaxed, engaged posture encourages worshippers to also be relaxed – and to make themselves open to God in worship.

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