

REMOVE THE OBSTRUCTIVE CRUTCH

Let's say that I invited you to my home. You accepted my invitation. You took the time and put forth the effort to get into your car, drive to my house, walk up to my front door, and knock. I answered... from behind the door.

In fact, let's say that I spent the duration of your visit attempting to converse with you from behind my door. Perhaps I poked my head around it just a bit, but for the vast majority of our time together I consistently made eye contact not with you, but with the door. How would that make you feel as an invited visitor to my home? Probably not very good.

Worshipers, Worship Leaders, Musicians, it is time to remove the obstructive crutch! By "obstructive crutch," I am referring to the music stand.

When I was much younger, I traveled around playing music in bars. Our typical set was 4 hours long. One time while playing at a bar in Nashville, TN, the band scheduled to play after us never showed up. We were asked to play a second 4 hour set. We played from 6pm to 2am with only a few 15 minute breaks. We NEVER used music stands. Everything was memorized.

Why would we do that? There are several reasons why we (and every other band that I knew) ditched the music stands long before we ever hit the stage.

We couldn't connect with the audience with that obstructive billboard right in front of us!
How could we maintain eye contact with the audience AND with the song sheet? We couldn't! It was either connect with people or with the podium. The people were a much higher priority! We wanted to see them and wanted them to see us. That is how normal people communicate.

The transition (of rustling papers) was terrible and totally killed the momentum. There is nothing worse than ending a high energy song only to experience the 30 seconds of everyone flipping pages trying to find their place in order to start the next. Yuck!

We realized that the stand was actually a crutch that kept us from growing stronger!
Before the days of cell phones, I actually had phone numbers memorized. (I *still* have those old numbers memorized.) Then I got a cell phone, which memorized the numbers for me. Guess how many numbers I have memorized since? Probably about zero. The same is true for the music stand. YOU CAN MEMORIZE THE MUSIC! You just don't, because you don't feel like you have to. Well, I am telling you that you have to! So many of the songs that we sing in church are just scripture put to music! What is wrong with hiding God's word in your heart and meditating on it day and night? Nothing! As long as you use the music stand and neglect the ultra-rewarding practice of memorizing the songs, you will forfeit the benefit of being able to pull out a song and lead worship any place, any time. Many a campfire has benefited from memorized worship songs!

It's not actually doing what you claim it is doing, anyway. I have seen Worship Leaders stand with their eyes glued to the music stand, only lifting them long enough to look at the lyrics projected on the back wall (potentially forgetting there is an audience to connect with-or at least non-verbally communicating their non-importance), and yet they STILL sing the wrong



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lyric or play the wrong chord!! Guess what... that music stand is not actually doing what you claim it is doing. It is not making you better. It is not making things less awkward. It is doing the very opposite of BOTH of those things. Until you take your eyes off of the song sheet, you will never really be able to *feel* the music, which is essential to getting better. As long as you stand with a barrier between you and the audience, it is going to be a bit awkward.

So stop. Stop using it. You can do it. If we did it for 4 hour gigs in a bar, you can do it for 30 minutes of worship in a church.