



## Lighting and Tech in Children's Ministry

I have probably been branded the lighting and techie guy in some children's ministry realms because I haul around over 7000 pounds of lighting, video, and sound gear when we travel and minister to children and families. That's probably more gear than most traveling children's evangelist that I personally know of.

Let me start off by saying I don't believe that lighting and tech is not necessary in children's ministry or ministry in general. However, it can be used to enhance worship and add excitement to certain parts of our services.

I started using lights in children's ministry after attending puppet productions puppet ministry conference years ago. I was taught at this conference that lighting can be used to direct attention to whatever is going on at the moment on stage. If the room is darkened and the stage is lit then children will focus on the stage area. Attention can be directed to certain parts of the stage where things are happening by darkening one area and lighting another.

My first lighting system was made by connecting silver clamp lights to a controller that was a wooden box with home rheostat dimmers. We have come a mighty long way over the last 25 years.



**First Jubilee Gang lighting rig.**

Over the years I have learned some do's and don'ts to lighting in ministry. Below are some of the things that I have learned that I would like to share.

1. Lighting during worship:

- a. When we use lighting during praise and worship it is meant to enhance the experience not to draw attention to its self. I have seen many children's ministers that have sporadic lighting going around the room that can be very distracting. When we lead children into worship, the attention should be on Jesus, not our awesome lighting show. Using colors and moving lights to change the mood from a happy time of fast and celebrating praise to warm colors and very subtle movements to create a more worshipful environment. Colors and scenes do not need to be changed many times during a song. Maybe one scene for the chorus and another for the verses are plenty. The colors and the amount of movement need to correspond with the mood of song being sang.
- b. When it comes to lighting and production to enhance the experience I am always reminded of the song "The Heart of Worship" by Matt Redman. "When the music fades and all is stripped away and I simply come. Longing just to bring something that's of worth that will bless your heart. I'm coming back to the heart of worship and it's all about you, it's all about You, Jesus. I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it when it's all about You " It's all about God not our show.

2. Less is more

- a. Sometimes it's tempting to give an audience everything you've got when you first get some really cool lights. When it comes to lighting I had to learn to control these urges. As I said before lighting is to enhance the service not to draw attention to it self. Most of the time good lighting is not even noticed. It is part of the entire experience. Most people don't walk away saying "wasn't that an awesome lighting show at church today?" it was part of the overall experience. A good lighting person will be able to dim the lights and smoothly transition them from one area to another and one scene to another without the crowd noticing. Make sure your lighting does not look cluttered or sporadic by using too many colors or too much movement.
- b. Exceptions to the rule: During games and other exciting times it's more expectable to use more lighting within reason.

3. Be considerate of your audience.
  - a. Today we have more and more children with sensory disorders and Autism. For these children some lighting effects and loud noises can set off adverse conditions for them including seizures and panic attacks. Strobe effects and quick sporadic movements are some of the things that can trigger this. I have started noticing this more over the last five or so years. Back in the day all we had to worry about was people with epilepsy having a seizure triggered by a strobe light or someone with Asthma have an attack because of the fog machines. Usually an asthma attack was a psychological one instead of the actual fog or haze used triggering it. However, we need to be considerate of our audience by warning parents ahead of time if we are using such effects. Also, we can be considerate by not going over board with certain effects like strobe and haze.
4. Tech is to reinforce the message not be the message.
  - a. Some one said the message never changes, but the methods must change from generation to generation. A Christian Magician once said when he develops new Gospel illusions that he always develops the Gospel message first then the illusion is developed to reinforce the message. Its tempting to come up with a really awesome illusion, then throw in a little gospel message to go with the illusion. This is what I am afraid happens in children ministry today many times. We come up with an elaborate production including lights video and sound, then try to fit the gospel into it. Instead of first knowing what God wants us to communicate to our audience and then using tech to reinforce what we are teaching. In my opinion this is of upmost importance in ministry that the message does not get lost in all the tech and awesome stuff. I ran lights at a Christian youth camp for years that started off very ministry oriented where kids experienced God and walked away changed. Throughout the years they became more and more tech savvy and even surpassed most large churches in the tech realm. As they perfected the technology being used the quality of ministry continued to decrease resulting in teens having an awesome time at camp but not as many lives were changed. Kids walked away saying wasn't the lights and production awesome this year instead of my life was touched by God and I will never be the same. I believe we can have all the technology and still flow with the Holy Spirit and see lives touched.

By all means let us take advantage of all the cool new technology to enhance the worship experience, but let us never create an awesome experience and add a little bible to it, so we can call it Christian.

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**Below is a link to one of our newest Intro's that we use during our live events.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLnmpE81gMEDP0krGqglwxqyCY7xok\\_zC&v=D2hm1nmVj5s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLnmpE81gMEDP0krGqglwxqyCY7xok_zC&v=D2hm1nmVj5s)