



Module 3: Posture/Attitude/Body Language

The will to win is not nearly as important as the will to prepare to win.

Vince Lombardi

Body language and voice inflections will be responsible for almost 90% of the impact you will have on an audience, whereas 10% is the content of your talk.

Repeat that statement several times and then reflect on situations in your life which give validity to the 90-10% formula.

In my experience, conservatively 70% of the clergy spanning several denominations have not presented a welcoming and joyous presence. Not only is this unacceptable, it is unproductive. Why speak if the message is lost?

Clerical services are called celebrations for a reason. The Officiant represents God to those in his/her presence, and God is love. There are times I try to simplify situations and events and this is one of those moments.

The first thing to consider is the event you will officiate. If possible get a feel for the setting, the circumstances and the participants. Is it in a church or a hall? Is it indoors or outside? Will there be a podium, a microphone or a professional audio system? Of course, if you are called to an emergency this will not be possible, but

in many cases, it will be pre-planned and therefore wise to investigate how best to deliver your message.

I am a believer in having an Officiant's book for each service. This includes specific prayers, reflections and notes prepared in advance. We will cover this in more detail in a later module. In the meantime, consider this tip as an important facet of the service.

Pay attention to your body language. Your stance will reveal your welcome quotient. I continue to work on my stance and body posture to create a relaxed and open mood. Not intentionally, but I notice through videos that often I appear rigid when I stand. This creates tension between me and the individuals I am administering. Only practice will help me successfully overcome this pitfall.

You control the atmosphere you bring to each service.

- Present a welcoming attitude to communicate God's love and acceptance of every living creature
- Know the situation in advance-- prepare and practice
- Spend a few moments prior to every situation even if an emergency in private prayer asking God to give you the grace, wisdom, and love to bring to all you are about to serve.

Reading versus proclaiming?

Anyone can read a prayer, scripture passage, or poem. The skilled Animal Chaplain proclaims in lieu of lecturing or reading. The difference is in voice inflection, enthusiasm, understanding the message, and the desire to be an actual emissary of God in bringing love and compassion to the participants.

The distinction is huge and the impact on those gathered equally as dramatic.

One additional point about this subject.

I used to think that if the Presider showed emotion or shed a tear during a funeral service or memorial that it would be a problem. Many times, I held back a tear. I mistakenly associated crying with weakness and as the Officiant I had to be strong. Sometimes it is joyful to be wrong. And wrong I was accepting full responsibility. Don't misunderstand; I am by no means a proponent of uncontrollable sobs or loss of control at a service. This is not acceptable demeanor. However, a tear and emotions are not only normal but part of the human condition and understandable at a pet loss service.

Please review the video included in this module.

Module 3: Assignment

Practice reading, then proclaiming the following prayer. Note the difference in impact. Once you have made sufficient progress on your posture and voice inflections, video yourself and send it to me for review.

Loving God, help me to know and understand the truth: Although my dear companion has passed away, he/she continues to live in spirit. Give me the grace of acceptance in my heart, and help me regain my balance and enjoyment of life. All your creation continues as a loving spirit. Help me take the wisdom and spiritual gifts my companion gave me and taught me and use them to give my life richer meaning. Help me share my precious gifts with others. Thank you for allowing me to care for one of your beloved angels and thank you for the beautiful, loved filled years we shared. Amen

Congratulations!
You have successfully completed Module 3.

Find a way to celebrate this accomplishment then spend some time to rest and reflect before moving on to Module 4.

