

Youth Leaders Academy

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Preaching for youth: what to preach about

APRIL 4, 2011 BY RACHEL

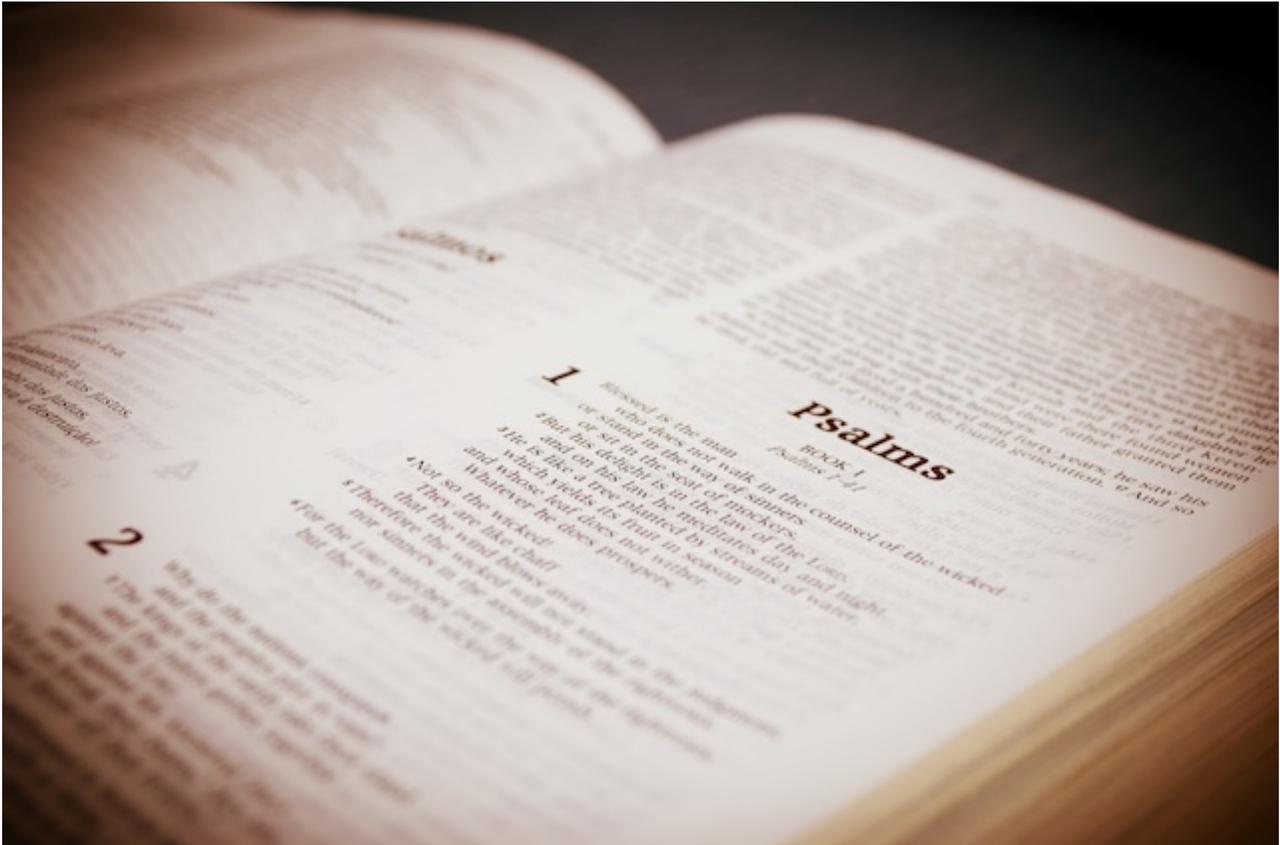
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An important topic to consider when [preaching for youth](#) is what to preach about. As always, there are different ways of approaching the choice of a text (and yes, I'm assuming you will use the Bible when you teach!). Some people pick a verse or more to preach on, and then study it to derive its message. Others prefer to come up with a theme or topic first, and then study the Bible to find appropriate verses. I'm not denouncing either method, they both have their distinct advantages and possible down-effects.

What is important to keep in mind when choosing your subject and your verses is this: the younger your audience is, the more trouble they will have with abstract thinking. Teens are simply not capable of much abstract

reasoning, so you'll have to keep your message concrete. That also impacts the verses you want to talk about.

If you're stuck in a rut and are looking for fresh, new topics to preach on to youth, then check out our Youth Sermon Topics page where new sermon ideas are added regularly!



The Psalms contain many difficult verses, but that doesn't mean we should skip these

Pick a surprising topic

I'm a big believer in teaching the whole Bible. Too often we only choose those parts that we like, that we can handle, that are safe and comfortable. But God didn't give us just a few parts, He gave us the whole Bible, including parts that we don't understand, that we need to wrestle with, that confuse us or make us plain furious.

As a matter of fact, I've seen too many pastors make the mistake of preaching only from the New Testament when teaching teens. Young people, like all people, need all of the Bible and no one can truly understand God or His message without reading His entire Word. Try and

pick the unfamiliar parts or topics. Dare to be different!

My first sermon for the 'adult congregation' was on heaven and hell (I know, quite popular now after the whole Rob Bell thing, but it wasn't a few years ago). It was completely new for many people and I got very positive feedback, because people loved hearing and learning something new.

Translate the message

However, when giving a talk to young people, be aware that they don't know what you know and they can't reason like you can. So pick parts that you can explain to them. That doesn't mean that it all needs to be simple, cookie-cut easy. You can preach on difficult parts, as long as you can translate these into a message they can grasp. But [making your message too practical](#) also has risks, you don't want to offer 'just milk' for instance.

Let's say you want to give a message on David en Bathsheba. That may get sticky for teens, all this sexual stuff. But you can translate it into concepts they can understand. What are they willing to do to get something they want? Like an iPad, or those new shoes, or...How far would they go if they really wanted something? And how does God feel about it when that is more important than what He wants? That's something they can understand.

Preach the context as well

Also, it's important to remember that the current generation of teens and students knows little about the Bible. It's sad, but it's a fact. Don't assume that they know who Paul was, or David, or that they know the meaning of concept like redemption, forgiveness, and grace. Whatever you teach, teach the context as well and [use language in your sermon they can understand](#). Explain where it is in the Bible, who wrote it, what period it was, etc.

You can do this subtly, but effectively. Here's how you could introduce Paul for instance, in case you're using one of his letters:

The verses we'll be reading today were written by Paul. He was a Jew who at fist wanted nothing to do with Jesus, he even killed Jesus-followers. Until God opened his eyes. He became a great missionary who lived in the first century after Jesus died and who traveled all through what is now Turkey and Greece to tell everybody about Jesus. He wrote these letters to the churches he founded and today we're going to read from one of them he wrote to the church in Ephesus.

In a simple way, you've established setting, date and told a little about Paul himself. It's enough to create a little background for kids who've never heard of him, but not so much that it'll bore those who know about him already.

These are just some things to consider when choosing a topic and a Bible part to teach on. How do you come up with topics or verses for your messages? Do you have any other advice?

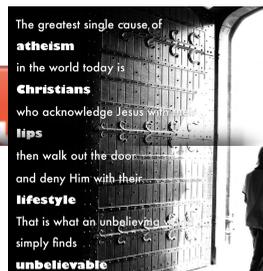
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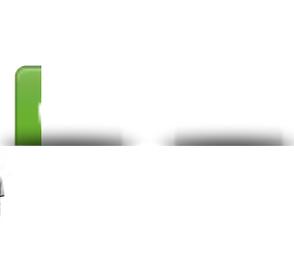
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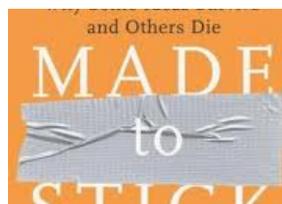
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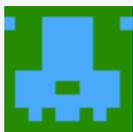


David Mabior says

[June 8, 2011 at 4:37 am](#)

you are very helpful to me and my ministry in the future. May God blessed you and continues touch in this product and for the purpose of His kingdom.

[Reply](#)



[heppy widjayanto](#) says

[August 31, 2011 at 8:55 am](#)

you can find clearly many subject that sometime blur for me. May I translate some of your articles into Indonesia, because It will bless many teaching or preaching and in my opinion many servant or preacher has little understanding in English.

Thanks

[Reply](#)



keamogetse Noel Ranko says

[November 3, 2011 at 10:48 am](#)

thank you so much for such an empowerment, the eyes of my heart are now opened in relation to preaching to the youth, keep doing the good work, its not in vain.

[Reply](#)

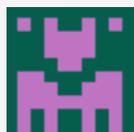


Rachel says

[November 3, 2011 at 10:56 am](#)

You're very welcome. Thank you for letting me know, it's such an encouragement to know my posts are making a difference!

[Reply](#)



ashvath says

[May 18, 2015 at 4:35 am](#)

God bless you so much i have learnt something new

[Reply](#)



Douglas Okonah Frempong says

[May 15, 2012 at 9:13 pm](#)

Thanks a million for the material. It answered a lot of relevant issues for a city-wide Youth Conference I am supposed to address tomorrow. God bless you.

[Reply](#)

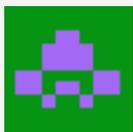


Rachel says

[May 16, 2012 at 2:21 pm](#)

You're very welcome, glad to be of help. God bless on your talk!

[Reply](#)



said shawky says

[July 12, 2012 at 2:44 pm](#)

good and useful keep doing great things

[Reply](#)



Rachel says

[July 12, 2012 at 4:20 pm](#)

Thanks, you're very welcome!

[Reply](#)



Zac says

[August 5, 2012 at 9:34 pm](#)

I am 16 years old, and are youth group is doing a thig where each of the youth preaches or teaches on Sunday. (just in front of the other youth) I am not sure what to preach or teach on. I'm not sure how to go about trying to find something either. Any suggestions. If you could give me multiple.

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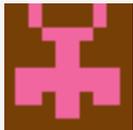
Rachel says

[August 22, 2012 at 2:24 pm](#)

Hi Zac, only now reading your question because I've been off a few weeks. Phew, tough assignment there...but also a great opportunity. I'd advise you to share something that you think a lot about, that means something to you or is something you struggle with. Is there something in the Bible that you find difficult, great, exciting or just plain confusing? Often when you speak from your own experiences, it comes across far better. Don't go for just theory, share what's on your heart. Also, don't worry about technical stuff at first, just make sure you stick to the time limit and that you've prepared well what you want to say exactly. Let me know

how it went, I'm praying for you man!

[Reply](#)



Yohana says

[May 31, 2013 at 11:11 am](#)

For the last 11 years I have been teaching and preaching mostly to adult. Tomorrow night will be my first time to share God's words to the youth. I read your writing about how to preach to youth. I am so thankful to God that He has shown me to your ideas. Thanks Rachel, I believed many ministers will be blessed through you.

[Reply](#)



[Rachel](#) says

[June 10, 2013 at 2:14 pm](#)

You're very welcome, I am ever so grateful to be of service to others. How did it go?

[Reply](#)

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[Youth Leaders Academy](#) says:

[April 10, 2011 at 9:24 am](#)

[...] is the second installment in a series about preaching for teens and students. We started with some thoughts on what you can preach about and next up is a post on identifying several risks of making your message too practical. Today [...]

[Four risks of making your sermon too practical | Youth Leaders](#)

[Academy](#) says:

[April 11, 2011 at 8:53 am](#)

[...] you checked out the first two posts in this series on Preaching for youth? The first is on what subjects you can preach about when preaching for youth and the second is about the importance of making a point. In the next installment in this series, [...]

[Preaching for youth: finding topics for sermons | Youth Leaders](#)

[Academy](#) says:

[November 16, 2011 at 11:24 am](#)

[...] two earlier posts in the series on Preaching for youth we discussed what to keep in mind when choosing topics to preach on for youth and the two routes to finding a topic, namely the expository route and the topical route. In this [...]

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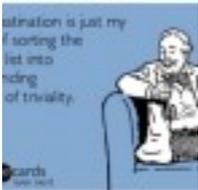
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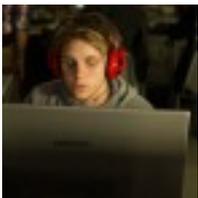
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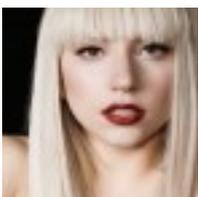
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