

GROW
2024

5 MISTAKES YOUTH PASTORS MAKE WHEN THEY'RE TEACHING

FEATURING

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NOTES

- 1 *Don't be boring...*
CAPTURE THEIR ATTENTION FIRST
- 2 *Don't focus on what you want to say...*
FOCUS ON WHAT TEENAGERS NEED
- 3 *Don't be complicated...*
HAVE ONE POINT AND REPEAT IT
- 4 *Don't just talk...*
ENGAGE ALL THEIR SENSES
- 5 *Don't be the star...*
EMPOWER THEM TO TELL THEIR STORIES

There's one question every youth pastor asks – "Are they even listening?" We get it. It's hard to know if your teenagers are engaged. Are they taking notes on their phone or sending memes to each other? While you can't always be certain kids are engaged with what you're saying, there are a few ways you can make your teaching time more compelling for them. Here are a few things to try...

INSTRUCTIONS

#1 CHOOSE THE RIGHT HOOK

Once you start teaching, you only have a few seconds to engage with teenagers. So, you'll need to create a compelling reason for them to pay attention right away. That's where hooks come in. Good hooks capture attention and draw an audience in so they want to learn more about whatever topic you're sharing. Here are a few of our favorite hooks.

- **QUESTIONS:** Aside from reading a dictionary definition, questions are one of the most popular ways to start a talk. Whenever we ask a question, the audience will try to answer it in their heads and, hopefully, stick around to hear how you would answer it.
- **SURPRISES:** The element of surprise is so engaging. Offer a new take on an idea or surprise your audience in a fun way that doesn't distract from the overall meaning or tone of your message.
- **PROBLEMS:** Start by talking about a problem. We all have them. Share an ironic concept or open with a focus on something that has been broken. Then, work to unpack the idea and provide a solution.
- **CONNECTIONS:** Audiences want to feel like they can relate to whoever is speaking to them. The more you can share stories, media, and experiences that foster connection, the better.
- **EXPERIENCES:** Open your teaching time by sharing about a life hack you've discovered or by explaining some part of life you've figured out that your teenagers might need help with. Draw them in with your experience and give them something that's truly helpful.

YOUR TURN! WRITE DOWN A FEW HOOKS YOU'VE USED THAT WORKED WELL, OR COME UP WITH SOME NEW ONES.

#2 SORT IT OUT

Now that you've figured out your hook, it's time to start thinking about the other parts of your teaching time. What are the stories that you'll share? The images or videos? How do all of the different parts of your message help reinforce the Big Idea you're focusing on? One way to sort through your stories, media, and other elements is to plot them out on a matrix. Create a large two-by-two grid on a wall using sticky notes. Label the columns "Important" and "Less Important." Label the rows "Engaging" and "Less Engaging." List out all of the stories, images, Scripture passages, activities, polls, questions, and other elements during your teaching time on sticky notes. Place each element from your teaching time somewhere on the grid based on its level of importance. Now, you have a list of the most important parts of your teaching time and the parts that can be developed or cut for time if needed.

- 1. ENGAGING AND IMPORTANT:** These are the most important parts of your teaching time. You'll want to make sure you emphasize these things so your teenagers hear about or experience them. Consider adding these things toward the middle and end of your teaching time.
- 2. LESS ENGAGING AND IMPORTANT:** These elements can provide important structure for your teaching time. Spread these out between the elements from Quadrant One.
- 3. ENGAGING AND LESS IMPORTANT:** These elements are often great for reorienting students and capturing their attention. Add these to the beginning of your teaching time and space them out wherever there might be a lull in energy.
- 4. LESS ENGAGING AND LESS IMPORTANT:** These elements are often used to fill time, which still has a purpose. If you end up short on time, these are the parts of your teaching time you can probably do without. Spread these elements throughout your teaching time or group them together.

With your hook and a good sense of the most important parts of your teaching time, you're ready to start organizing your elements as you create an engaging, relatable teaching time!