

## Consider Preschool Before the Pulpit

Practice makes perfect, so the saying goes—and often one of the hardest things for a novice preacher to do is find opportunities to practice their skills. One place they may want to consider:

### **Children's ministry.**

Since the fall, I've been teaching in our children's worship service, usually once a month. After songs and prayer, I teach a short message before the kids aged 5-8 are dismissed to their individual classes—and for me, at least, the experience has been extremely helpful. Here are three things I've been reminded through the experience:

#### **1. Teaching children requires you to focus.**

Whenever you're teaching kids, it's important to remember one thing: You have almost no time to get your message across. Teachers in our program are allotted around 20 minutes.

**I aim for ten.** And sometimes, I even hit it (I average between 10-15 minutes).

This is not a lot of time, and because kids often have short attention spans, it means I really have to **focus**. I need to make sure the message is easy to follow, the points are clear, and the application is super-concrete.

Which, by the way, is what we should be shooting for when preaching to adults, too. Adults need just as much clarity of thought and focus as children. There's nothing worse than listening to (or preaching for that matter) a scattered, rambly sermon—one that has great content, but you can't follow the flow or find the application. When we're unfocused in our teaching, we lose our audience.

But if you can get a point across in 10 minutes, chances are you can do it in 40 if needed.

#### **2. Teaching children requires you to be flexible.**

Kids are awesome because they're funny—but **they're also natural hecklers.**

If you ask a question like, "Why did Jesus die on the cross," you might get an answer that makes sense, or you might learn what they had for breakfast that morning. And if you're not ready for it, you're going to get flustered.

Teaching kids helps you to learn flexibility and forces you to rely not too much on your prepared notes and more on your preparation.

#### **3. Teaching children requires you to be interesting.**

One of the hardest things to do is keep a child's attention, especially in a really wide age range.

One of the best ways to keep a kid's attention: be interesting. One of our teachers uses props pretty regularly (he often dresses up in costume). Me, I'm not a big prop guy, but I do my best to be fun and funny in a way that fits with how God's wired me.

In all honesty, though, keeping the kids' attention is always going to be a challenge. They're the easiest audience to read in terms of whether they're paying attention or not, and when they're all in, you can tell. Ask questions, do something silly, speak directly to them whenever you can... all of this helps you genuinely engage them.

Brothers, the point is this: if you're feeling called to preach, **consider preschool before the pulpit**. Your church has a prime training ground for you—it's called children's ministry. Serve in a place where God has already placed you and in a ministry area sorely in need of volunteers—and do what God has called you to do: make disciples.

Whether they're big or small, it doesn't matter.

Read more from Aaron [here](#).