

# Is Bible Study Relevant for Youth Ministry?

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Oil does not mix with water. Many act like this is the case with teens and Bible study. 'Spiritual discipleship should not feel like a lesson.' Or, 'Teens have so much stress and anxiety, feelings of inferiority, worries about sex and gender, peer pressure, etc. They need to talk about these issues.' Or: 'Large portions of the Bible are not going to feel relevant to their lives, they will find it boring.'



With all these concerns, why should we make Bible study with our teens a priority? Because of the reasons given within scripture itself: God's Word is spiritual food that keeps us spiritually alive (Matt. 4:4). God's Word has supernatural, life-changing power (Heb. 4:12, Jn. 8:31-32). Studying God's Word keeps us from extremes and error (Matt. 7:24-27, Matt. 22:29). Finally, we are commanded to teach it (Matt. 29:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Maybe you accept the importance of the Bible, but wonder how it can be taught effectively to those in this age bracket. They aren't Sunday School children any more, but they are also not yet adults. Here are some ideas I've found helpful:

- Recognize that God's Word itself is the source of truth and our guide for life. As such, it's important to actually read the Bible with teenagers. The number of verses you study depends on your group and your time constraints, but when teens understand, remember, and learn to apply even a few verses it has power to impact their lives.
- Let the Word of God impact your life before you teach it. Prepare in advance by at least a few days. Spend time with it in prayer, drawing near to the Lord as you do, before you share it with your kids.
- Use creative methods that help the text come to life and connect to our lives today. A good Bible lesson has four parts: Hook, Book, Look and Took. 1. Hook: Use an intriguing introduction that draws the kids' interest and hints at why the lesson is important. 2. Book: Make observations on the selected Bible passage itself that are clear and interesting. 3. Look: Understand how the passage relates

to life now – the teens discuss the application of the verses to modern life. 4. Took: Have the kids decide what will they ‘take’ from this lesson for their own lives. (Some lessons based on this plan can be found in the “Bible Studies:” section of the “Generate Youth Ministry” website).

- Better not to lecture; let the teens interact with the text. They can read the passage silently, or read it out loud in turns, or perhaps read it as a role play. Ask both content and meaning questions as well as application questions. Or you might ask things like, “What do these verses tell us about God? Is there anything that’s difficult to understand? How could you express the meaning of this passage in one sentence?”

Most importantly, value their answers. They should not feel like you have the ‘right answer’ and you are just waiting for them to say it. If an answer is not on the right track, a question back to the group, such as, ‘What do the rest of you think?’ is helpful.

Some other pointers:

- The studies should not be all the same. The worst method of Bible study is one that loses its effectiveness because it is overused. You can vary the visuals, involve all members of the group in the discussion. You can mix it up periodically with a thematic discussion or holiday celebration.
- One other goal is to help the students study the Bible on their own. Make sure their Bibles are modern translations. Suggest good books of the Bible to start with. Give them opportunities to practice personal study with your direction.
- Remember to balance your time in the Bible with other important group activities. Playing games, praying for each other, and just talking are important, too. For keeping kids’ interest, I don’t recommend Bible studies that last longer than 20-30 minutes.

Jim Rayburn, founder of Young Life, said: ‘It’s a sin to bore a kid with the gospel.’ I’m not sure if it’s a sin, but a boring Bible lesson leads kids to believe that the Bible is a boring book, God is boring, and a relationship with Him is not interesting.

Handled with care, Bible study is not only relevant but essential to youth ministry. God bless you as you grow with your students in studying God’s Word!