



American Expression E1072 Preaching to the choir

IOTS Publishing Team  
International Online Teachers Society  
Since 2011

The idiom "preaching to the choir" is a figurative expression that conveys the idea of trying to convince or persuade an audience that is already in agreement or shares the same beliefs, opinions, or values as the speaker. It suggests that the efforts to persuade are unnecessary because the audience is already on the same page, metaphorically likening the situation to a preacher delivering a sermon to a congregation that is already devout and faithful.

This saying is often used when someone is expending energy and time to advocate for a viewpoint or argue a position to individuals who are already supportive or in alignment. The underlying implication is that the speaker's efforts are redundant since they are essentially "preaching" to a group that is already convinced.

The origin of the phrase can be traced to the practice of preaching in religious settings, where the choir members were already deeply committed to the beliefs being shared. Thus, the preacher's message was unnecessary for them as they were already dedicated followers. Over time, the expression evolved to apply to any situation where persuasion or argumentation is directed toward an audience that doesn't need to be convinced.

"Preaching to the choir" is often used humorously or ironically to point out the futility of trying to change minds where no change is needed. It can also be a way to gently remind someone that their efforts might be better spent on reaching a different audience that holds opposing views.

This phrase underscores the importance of understanding one's audience and tailoring communication accordingly. In effective communication, it's crucial to identify the receptive audience and direct persuasive efforts toward those who might benefit from the message.

Furthermore, "preaching to the choir" can be a reminder of the need for diversity in discourse. Engaging with people who hold different viewpoints allows for critical thinking, growth, and a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues.

In conclusion, "preaching to the choir" is an idiom that encapsulates the concept of expending effort to convince an audience that already agrees with the speaker's perspective. Rooted in the analogy of religious preaching, this expression humorously highlights the redundancy of trying to persuade those who are already convinced. It serves as a reminder of the importance of effective communication and engaging with a variety of viewpoints to foster critical thinking and broaden one's understanding of different perspectives.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What does the idiom "preaching to the choir" reveal about the dynamics of persuasive communication and the importance of understanding one's audience? Can you think of instances where this situation might arise in everyday conversations or larger societal discussions?
  2. How does the metaphor of a preacher addressing a choir resonate with the concept of trying to convince a group that already shares the same beliefs? What other metaphors or analogies could capture a similar idea?
  3. In what ways does the phrase "preaching to the choir" underscore the need for diverse viewpoints and engaging with those who hold differing opinions? How might engaging with opposing views contribute to well-rounded understanding?
  4. Humor often accompanies the use of this idiom. How does the phrase's humorous undertone highlight the irony of trying to persuade a receptive audience? Can humor serve as a constructive way to address this situation?
  5. The expression has expanded beyond its religious origins to encompass various contexts. Can you provide examples of situations where individuals might inadvertently find themselves "preaching to the choir"? How might they redirect their efforts to engage with a broader audience?
-