

Study: Improving Our Teaching / Preaching / Listening

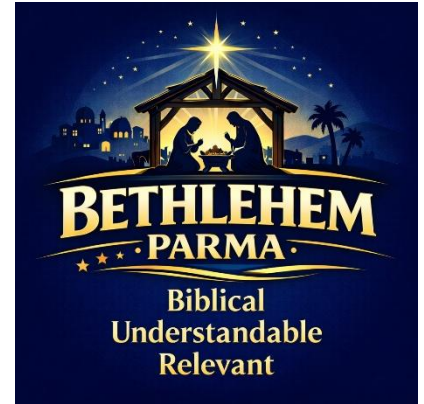
Biblical – Understandable – Relevant

What am I hoping to accomplish in this class? I want us to:

1. Understand the words – Biblical, Understandable, and Relevant!
2. See how they are true of teaching / preaching in the Bible!
3. Listen, as a student / hearer, for those realities!
4. Incorporate those realities when we are the teacher / preacher!

What percentage of people who attend an LCMS church also attend a class?

- Based on a Google search: Somewhere between **8%** and **40%**.
- Based on the first three weeks of November at Bethlehem: **72%**



What do these key words mean?

- **Biblical** – Our content ♦ is contained in the Bible or ♦ relates to the Bible.
- **Understandable** – The students / hearers get, grasp, comprehend what is being taught.
- **Relevant** – To the students / hearers, it is pertinent, appropriate, useful.
 - **Pertinent** – directly related to and important for the matter being considered
 - **Appropriate** – suitable, fitting, or right for a particular situation, purpose, or context.
 - **Useful** – able to help, serve a purpose, or produce a practical benefit.

How did Jesus teach?

- Jesus said what **not** to do (*listen to Me or you will lose your reward*): **Matthew 6:1** “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ² So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”
- Jesus said what they **should** do to gain God’s reward: ³ “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing [that is, don’t draw attention to yourself when giving], ⁴ so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees *what is done in secret* will reward you.”
- Jesus’ teaching was **Biblical**, **easy to understand**, and **useful** – since it had direct and immediate application in their lives!

What are other examples of teaching / preaching being useful for the students / hearers?

1. Teaching that leads to repentance and changed behavior:

a. Jonah 3:4–10 – Jonah in Nineveh

- i. Jonah’s preaching led the whole city to repent.
- ii. Result: people fasted, turned from violence, and God relented from judgment.
- iii. Usefulness: moral and spiritual transformation.

- b. **Nehemiah 8:1–12** – Ezra read and explained the Law
 - i. The Levites “gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading” (v. 8).
 - ii. The people wept, then rejoiced and obeyed.
 - iii. Usefulness: understanding + obedience.
- 2. Teaching that brought faith and salvation:
 - a. **Acts 2:14–41** – Peter on Pentecost
 - i. Peter explained Scripture and proclaimed Christ.
 - ii. The hearers were “cut to the heart” and asked what to do.
 - iii. About 3,000 were baptized.
 - iv. Usefulness: led directly to repentance, baptism, and new life.
 - b. **Acts 8:30–35** – Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch
 - i. Philip explained Isaiah and preached Jesus.
 - ii. The eunuch believed and was baptized.
 - iii. Usefulness: clarified Scripture and led to faith.
- 3. Teaching that builds understanding and maturity:
 - a. **Matthew 13:51–52** – Jesus explains his parables
 - i. Jesus asked, “Have you understood all these things?”
 - ii. Understanding is the goal, not mystery for its own sake.
 - iii. Usefulness: spiritual insight.
 - b. **Acts 18:24–28** – Apollos was instructed by Priscilla and Aquila
 - i. Apollos was already eloquent, but his teaching was incomplete.
 - ii. After instruction, he powerfully refuted opponents and helped believers.
 - iii. Usefulness: correction and strengthening of ministry.
- 4. Teaching that encourages and strengthens believers:
 - a. **Acts 15:30–32** – Judas and Silas
 - i. They exhorted and strengthened the believers “with many words.”
 - ii. Plainly described as encouragement.
 - iii. Usefulness: consolation and stability.
 - b. **1 Thessalonians 2:13**
 - i. Paul thanked God that the word was received “not as a human word, but as God’s word,” and that it was “at work in you believers.”
 - ii. Usefulness: ongoing spiritual effect.
- 5. Scripture reflects on its own usefulness:
 - a. **Deuteronomy 32:46–47**
 - i. “These are not empty words for you, but your very life.”
 - ii. Usefulness: life-giving instruction.
 - b. **2 Timothy 3:16–17**
 - i. Scripture is useful for teaching, correction, training, and equipping.
 - ii. Usefulness: prepares people for faithful living.

Big picture takeaway: In the Bible, preaching and teaching are considered useful when they:

- Help people understand God's will.
- Lead to repentance or faith.
- Strengthen and equip believers.
- Produce obedience and transformed lives.

In other words, biblical teaching / preaching is measured by whether it does something good in the hearers.

These are my general thoughts and prayers when preparing for my teaching and preaching:

- I try to choose a text or topic that is **relevant** (pertinent, appropriate, useful) to my students / hearers.
- I try to follow this passage: ^{NAS} **Ezra 7:10** "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."
- Then, as I'm preparing, I'm asking myself the following questions:
 1. What is the **meaning** of the text or topic?
 2. How does the text or topic **apply to my life**?
 3. How can I best explain the text or topic, so everyone is able to rightly **understand it**?
 4. How can I best help my students / hearers to **see the usefulness** of what I am teaching or preaching, and encourage them to apply the text or topic in their lives?

Keep in mind that relevance makes application possible *and application is critical*:

- Which ones are wise? **Matthew 7:24-25** "...everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."
- Who are the mature? **Hebrews 5:14** "...solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." // Practice is application!
- Who are not deceived? **James 1:22** "...prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." // The doers are not deceived! So, *application is critical!*

Why have I shared the contents above? So that we as teachers / preachers and students / hearers may, by the Holy Spirit, continue to grow in our **understanding** and **application** of **God's word in our lives!**