

Jesus for Everyone (Acts 17:10-34)

In contrast to the outrage and overreaction in Thessalonica, the Bereans respond “more nobly (v11)” They seek to verify. They withhold judgement until they’ve been able to reason for themselves.

Q: Are you a person who seeks to understand? Are you aware of your own motives and intentions in disagreements? Who or what informs you of truth?

Paul is alone in Athens, waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him, and deeply distressed by a city full of idols. (v16)

Paul still goes about doing what he’s been doing: reasoning in the synagogue with Jews and reasoning in the marketplace with those who happened to be there (v17)

Q: In all of your life experience, personality, interests, and gifts, how are you willingly and joyfully engaged in fostering the best opportunity for gospel growth in yourself and others?

Here, in Athens, is the most complete sermon delivered to the Gentiles by Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

1. UNDERSTAND WHO YOU’RE TALKING TO.

“He knew it would be futile to refer to a history that no one knew, or to argue from the fulfillment of a prophecy that no one was interested in, or to quote from a book that no one read or accepted as authoritative.” Richard N. Longenecker.

Epicureans believe that the world and the gods are a long way from one another, so we should get on with life as best we can and get maximum pleasure from a trouble-free existence.

Stoics believe that the divine is within this world and within each human being. So we ought to look to ourselves and harness that. The good life is found within, unaffected by things outside our control.

2. RECEIVE MISUNDERSTANDING WITH GRACE.

- His character is questioned. (v18)
- His content is questioned.
- He is brought before the highest court in the city to be evaluated. (v19-21)

Q: Do you respond with patience, grace, and understanding when someone misquotes, mischaracterizes, or misunderstands you?

3. PAY ATTENTION.

- He was distressed by the idolatry.
- He is able to reference and quote their own philosophy and poetry.
- He was observant of their viewpoints and of their city.

Q: Are you growing in your understanding of who people are, what they care about and what people think the good life is?

4. BE GENEROUS.

- He doesn't unnecessarily offend. (v22)
- He compassionately shows them how their knowledge is incomplete by starting with what they know. (v23)
- He finds common ground.

Q: Do you characteristically present other people's thoughts and concerns with fairness and reasonableness? Are you generous in your word choices, discussions and disagreements?

"Sometimes we Christians are so angry at the state of society that all that comes through is the anger and not the love we are to have for our neighbor in need. Those who see this anger and want to represent the faith differently can overreact the other way, almost pretending as if there is no idolatry as long as the religious search is sincerely motivated. Paul avoids both these extremes." Darrell L. Bock, Acts, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT

5. BE CLEAR.

- They have been in ignorance. Now something new has happened. They need to repent. (v30)
- God has appointed a man to right all rights and call it into account—to judge it.
- How do we know that man is Jesus? God raised him from the dead. (v31)

Q: Does fear of potential loss or opposition keep you from talking about your life with Jesus? Are you praying for boldness?

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, so that I may make it known as I should. Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person. Colossians 4:2-6