



SHARING JESUS TO OTHER RELIGIONS

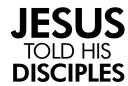
Paul Goffin

We live in a world with many religions apart from Christianity. Some are polytheistic, some are monotheistic, someand some have no god at all, such as atheism and communism. We are called to witness to
people of all of these religions.
Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV)
Each of these religions will require a different approach, so in this session we cannot deal with specifics but with general principles that can be applied to any situation. If you are not sure how to address a problem a good place to look for an answer is in scripture, and our example of how to share Jesus with others is in Acts 17:16-34was a great evangelist and spreader of the gospel, arguably the best ever. After he was miraculously converted on the road to Damascus sharing the good news about Jesus was what he spent the rest of his life doing, and ultimately led to his martyrdom for the faith.
Paul spent most of his time preaching to Jews andgentiles, but on his second missionary journey he ended up preaching to completely different people with a range of different beliefs. He went to Thessalonica and preached to the Jews but had to flee as they wanted to attack him. Paul then went to Berea, where the people were much more receptive and wanted to hear what he had to say and people were converted there, but he had to flee this town as well when troublemakers came from Thessalonica. He then ended up in
While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So, he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those

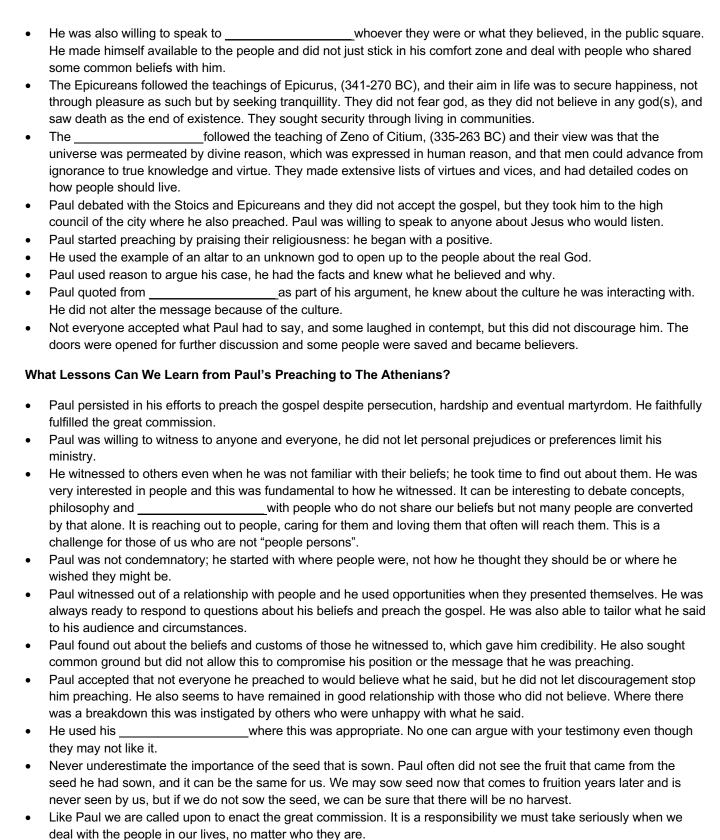
who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Rather, He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from any one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring.' "Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. (Acts 17:16-34, NIV)

- Paul was affected by seeing so many idols in the streets, he realised that these people had pagan beliefs that were not Christian, and he was concerned for the spiritual wellbeing of these people.
- Paul, as he usually did, started his work in Athens by going to preach to the Jews and God-fearing gentiles as his first priority, he did not allow his beliefs or his works to be affected by the environment of a different belief system.









To show Jesus to people of different faiths we must first love them, this is done by establishing relationships with them first and caring for them and finding out about them as people, as well as about their beliefs. We need to do our research and be ready to give an account of our faith and what it means to us. We should be ready to answer their questions and point them towards the truth. We should not try and engage in arguments or debates to "score points", but rather to lead them towards the truth about Jesus. Then we will be fulfilling the great commission that Jesus has entrusted to us.