

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Go! Observe! Engage! Proclaim!

Acts 17:16-33

Keywords: gospel, God, Missions, Missional, Evangelism

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. Why this message.
- B. Background to this text.
 - 1. City of Athens— Home of Socrates and Plato; adopted home of Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno.
 - 2. A veritable forest of idols (There were approximately thirty thousand gods in Athens at this time!)
 - 3. Epicureans and Stoics were among those in the marketplace (vs 18).
 - a. Epicureans—Epicurus (341-270 B.C.).
 - (1) Pre-evolutionists.
 - (2) Soul dissolved at death.
 - (3) Gods were, at best, uninterested with this world.
 - (4) Pleasure, here and now, was the goal.
 - (5) "Eat and drink for tomorrow we die."
 - b. Stoics—Zeno (340-265 B.C.).
 - (1) Pantheistic.
 - (2) Soul absorbed into god at death.
 - (3) Emphasized individual self-sufficiency.
 - (4) Believed they impacted the divine being with their lives.
 - 4. This is what we now call “post-modernism.”

II. How To Bring The Gospel To The People.

Preached on January 4, 2015

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A. Exposition of the text:

1. 16-21.
 - a. Waiting for Silas and Timothy (15).
 - b. Becomes provoked due to the complete paganism that is before him.
 - c. Goes into the synagogues and the marketplace to share the gospel.
 - d. Gets into disputes.
 - e. Is brought before the council of Areopagus to give answers to his speech.
2. 22-31.
 - a. Acknowledges their belief system.
 - b. But doesn't dwell on it, rather, takes one of the altars as his introduction.
 - c. Then makes it clear that what he is preaching (proclaiming) is not another god, another alternative, but it is truth.
 - d. Paul systematically deconstructs their belief systems—not by arguing with them, but by positively proclaiming the superiority of God and the Gospel.
 - e. Starts with God.
 - (1) Note that this requires you to be a person who has a good theology proper. This is not an option.
 - (2) Creator—eliminates all other gods with this.
 - (3) Lord—establishes His reign over His creation and their accountability (remember they were in Roman rule—Caesar was 'lord.')
 - (4) Uniqueness—uncreated and stands outside creation.
 - (5) Self-sufficient—nothing created can give Him anything needed.
 - (6) Life-giver—places us in the position of leaning on Him, and the accountability that we receive “all things” yet without thanks.

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- (7) All mankind are from Him—by saying verse 26 He is saying that God is not merely a God of the Jews, but for all mankind.
 - (8) Another statement of Lordship—that every nation and every border is established by God. The rise and fall of nations (like Greece) are in His hands.
 - (9) His immanence/nearness—man was created for the purpose ‘that’ (27) they would seek Him.
 - (a) He is near.
 - (b) We lack the ability to see Him, but this does not relieve us of our responsibility to seek him.
 - (c) He is not just interested in national and international aspects of His creation, but the very lives of each person.
 - (10) By virtue of being Creator, he is our father.
 - (11) Therefore, as children of Him, we cannot ‘create’ Him in forms of silver and gold. We do not create god so as to worship him (29).
 - (a) He is not produced from our thoughts and by the exertion of our will.
 - (b) Rather it is the other way around.
3. After we proclaim God, we proclaim accountability and response to God (30-31).
- a. First God’s patience—think how long some of you lived apart from God, yet He saved you.
 - b. Second our accountability to the truth.
 - (1) We must repent.
 - (2) It is a universal command, “all everywhere.”
 - c. Third, judgment by God.
 - (1) A fixed day.
 - (2) A sense of urgency.
 - (3) All shall face Him.

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- (4) It shall be done in righteousness—God has a standard by which all shall be judged.
 - (5) This judgment is accomplished through another who was appointed—“a Man.”
 - (6) The right of this man to be judge is through God having raised Him.
4. 33-34.
- a. Response.
 - (1) Negative.
 - (2) Positive.
 - (3) Paul had accomplished his work (18:1).
- B. Observations with regarding our need to be out witnessing.
1. We need to pray for a heart that is provoked (16).
 - a. Too comfortable with the gods of this world.
 2. Stop waiting, we are waiting people into the grave.
 - a. Paul is waiting for his friends, but that does not stop him (16).
 - b. Stop waiting for an opportunity. This is not meaning that you just wander around grabbing any and all. But it does mean that you are to be actively seeking others.
 3. We need to be disciplined to the task of engaging our culture (17).
 - a. **2 Timothy 1:7-8** or God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.
 - b. This means we have to be among the people. Make friends, join a league, choose where you fish, get to know your waitress and cashier.
 - c. Paul was not going door-to-door. It was in the marketplace and the synagogue because those are the places where thoughts and beliefs are exchanged. He honored their cultural standards.
 - (1) The old men at McDonalds every single morning.

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- (2) Playgroups in the park.
 - (3) Coffee shops.
 - (4) Dog parks.
 - (5) Toastmasters.
 - (6) Softball teams.
- d. It means we can't just "hang out" and "chill." Paul was waiting but actively observing as he waited. Listen to their conversation, what they buy, what they are concerned over.
 - e. As this takes place you will often have opportunity to speak truth into a situation (i.e. Woodworking class and discussion on marriage vs living together).
4. We have to know where the person is "at," what is his worldview and then engage them at that point (17).
 - a. They, in a sense, set the initial rules of engagement.
 - b. Ask questions, learn about what they believe and don't believe. Be willing to show genuine interest in them—see them as what they are—poor sinners, lost sheep, and love them.
 - c. We must be convinced that what we have is the Truth. And until that happens we will not be willing to engage them on their grounds.
 - d. Use the tools of dialogue—converse!
 - e. Be regular in this task (Paul was every day out there at the marketplace—17).
 5. Be focused on the core of the gospel (Christ, death for sin, buried, and raised on third day—vs 18).
 - a. Be creative.
 - b. Weave it into your talks. Practicing this makes perfect.
 6. Accept opportunities to speak (19-21).
 7. Do not try to prove God, proclaim God (23).
 8. If you are unsure where a person stands, ask (23).

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- a. He was going around looking at all the altars and statues, observing with the purpose to understand them.
- b. Questions, questions, questions.
9. Bring ***God*** to bear on their worldview.
 - a. Everyone has a god.
 - b. Everyone is defined by what they worship. Though they may not call it worship.
10. Start with creation.
 - a. It is the first word of the gospel message if they do not already believe it.
 - b. Romans 1:18-25. Note the “creation” words of 20, 23, 25.
 - c. Repeatedly the Old Testament speaks of God as the Creator. It automatically set Him apart from all other gods.
 - d. It is the chief sin that we do not see Him as creator and glory in him as creator. A good person is still a guilty person in that they live day to day without any real awareness that they live in God’s creation at God’s pleasure and to honor God in thanksgiving.
 - e. Using the law is good and fine, but that is not what Paul did here. He was not talking to “churched” people but pagans.
11. Call for a response (30).
12. Stop when they reject.

III. Conclusion.

- A. How do I sum all this up? Four verbs: Go! Observe! Engage! Proclaim!
- B. God is sovereign in salvation.
- C. And God’s sovereignly has ordained that the means by which He saves is through the proclamation of the gospel.
 1. Romans 10:13-15.
 2. Acts 8:31.
 3. Ephesians 6:13-15.

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Small Group Questions

- What are the things that you find hold you back from engaging people intentional for the gospel? Be honest here. How can Missio and this Community Group help you?
- Why is “calling for a response” so hard for so many? What drives that reluctance and what is wrong with it?
- Name one or two areas that you either have already committed yourself to for the purpose of bring the gospel to others or that you know are avenues before you. Have the CG leader write these down so that they can be revisited consistently.