

## The Power of the Scripture

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

### Read Aloud Acts 17:1-9

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own WORDS. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

### Acts 17:1-3

Paul's missionary tactic in each city was to begin at the Synagogue. God's chosen people, the Jews, had an understanding of the Scripture and were awaiting the Messiah. Therefore, Paul was able to reason with them about the Scriptures that they knew and believed, proving from the Scripture that Jesus was the awaited Messiah.

- A Notice that Paul did not simply share about his testimony, the amazing things that God had done, or the benefits of being a Christian. Rather he focused on helping the Jewish people see that Jesus was the Messiah according to truth, according to God's Word. Experiences can be debated, emotions can be deceiving, but the Word of God is unchanging.
- B Also, notice that Paul did not simply lecture or argue with the Jews but rather "reasoned." Isaiah 1:18 shows God's heart of reasoning with us. He wants us to come to a deep understanding of Him. He desires us to wrestle through our questions, our concerns, and our struggles. He desires to meet us where we are and bring understanding to our hearts.

**Question: What does "reasoning" with God look like for you? How do you wrestle through the questions that rise up in your heart?**

### Acts 17:4-9

1 After reasoning from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ, Paul received various responses. Some received the message of the Cross, some rejected the message, and some were agitated by the message.

- A Those who were saved: Some people placed their faith in the Scriptures, in the promises of God, that Jesus was the only way to salvation, and that He truly was the Messiah of the Scriptures.
- B Those who rejected: not all who heard the reasoning of Paul in the Scriptures believed. It is important to realize all we can do is share the Word of God in love. Two people can hear the same exact words and have two opposite responses to them. It is God who brings the change!
- C Some who heard the Word became angry and hateful towards the Gospel. This is something that Jesus promised us would happen. John 15:18

**Question: Do you ever find yourself taking it personally when someone does not receive the Gospel or rejects you when sharing the Gospel?**

## 2 The Christians at the time were known for two things in this passage.

**A** Turning the world upside down: The power of the Gospel is impactful. The Bible says that those who have placed their faith in Christ receive the same Spirit and the same power that rose Jesus from the dead! Everywhere Paul went there was either revival or riots. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and the Spirit of God is convicting. As believers, we are called to stick out in this dark world, we are called to make a change, and ultimately we are called to “flip the world upside down.”

**B** Having a King above Caesar: The Christians were known to have a higher authority than Caesar. Their ultimate allegiance was not to any man, but rather to Jesus Himself. As disciples of Jesus, we are proclaiming Jesus not only as our Savior but as our King. He has the ultimate authority in our life; our life is no longer our own!

**?** **Question: How does viewing Jesus as not just your Savior, but also your King, impact your daily life?**

**?** **Question: What do you think it practically looks like to “turn the world upside down” for Jesus in our day and age?**

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### **Read Aloud Acts 17:10-15**

Describe what is happening in your own words.

#### **Acts 17:10-12**

Paul followed his pattern by reasoning with the Scriptures at the Synagogue. Here the Bereans proved themselves to be students of God’s Word. They not only reasoned with Paul, but they closely examined the Word of God to test what Paul taught.

Being students of the Word not only helps us grow in our faith, but it challenges our Pastors and leaders to be excellent in dividing the Word. When we reason with one another and challenge one another in the Word, we embark on a lifelong journey of growing in our understanding of Scripture and relationship with God.

**?** **Question: Would you describe yourself as a “Berean” someone who examines the Scriptures? If yes, what does that look like for you?**

#### **Acts 17:13-15**

Despite the success in Berea, the opposition followed the apostles. The devil, sin, and the flesh are relentless in their efforts to stop the advancement of the Gospel. Part of the Christian life is being able to withstand the storms of life and the persecution from the world. To be disciple-makers, we must be intentional about our own spiritual life, that of our family, of our church, and of the mission to reach a dying world all while being tested and tried. This type of endurance and stamina can only be found in the grace of God.

1 Corinthians 15:10 & James 1:2-4

**?** **Question: Do you find yourself overcoming amid the multifaceted life of a disciple? Or being overcome by the challenges and pressures?**

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# The Foolishness of the Cross


## **Read Aloud Acts 17:16-21**

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own words. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

## **Acts 17:16-17**

Paul could not apathetically stand by while the Athenians were deceived into idol worship. He saw a lost world dying under the deception of Satan and the worship of false gods. The reality and urgency of this matter provoked the spirit within him; he was restless! He was bothered!

Paul's conviction did not end with a few angry comments to fellow Christians but rather ended with action. Due to his conviction, he moved to reason with the Jews and other religious philosophers of the time.


 **Question: We live in a day and in a country that is full of idols. The idol of sports, the idol of money, the idol of false religions, the idol of self, the idol of sex, the idol of alcohol, and the list goes on. Does this provoke your spirit? Or do you find yourself becoming numb to the lost world around you?**

## **Acts 17:18-21**

**1** *The Epicureans* were philosophers who taught that pleasure was the chief goal in life. For some this meant debauchery. The goal of life was to enjoy alcohol, sex, and any other fleshly rush. However, others viewed this same philosophy in a more mild manner. They viewed the pursuit of pleasure through things like family, a good job, helping others, etc as the way to ultimate pleasure. Either way, the human experience they believed revolved around finding pleasure for oneself.

**2** *The Stoics* taught that there was order to nature and that man should live according to nature. Ultimately, man had been given everything he needed to survive and thrive. In addition to this, there was nothing to be gained from the material world, but the only true value was found in virtue. This was ultimately tested by unforeseen circumstances in life. Stoics prided themselves on being unmoved by the events of life and holding fast to their virtue no matter the cost or circumstance. Ultimately this philosophy was rooted in self-reliance and pride.

As Paul preached the resurrection, both of these philosophies were challenged. The chief aim of the Gospel is not to please oneself, but rather deny oneself so that we may please God. This would have angered the Epicureans. The Gospel also tells us that we are poor, wretched, and naked without God, and that we do not have the means to live truly a virtuous life outside of the grace of God working through faith. This would have angered the Stoics.

 **Question: Do you find yourself falling into one of these philosophies? Seeking self-pleasure as your chief aim? Or taking pride in your virtues and morals?**



The *Aeopagus* was a court that both held judicial cases and was a place of spiritual debate. Perhaps nowhere was more fitting to discuss the Gospel. The reality of judgment and the sentence pronounced on all sinners, as well as the mystery of religion, is revealed through Christ. You could say the place of Paul's dissertation was prophetic in itself.

The philosophers took an interest in what Paul was teaching. However, it is interesting to note their motivation. It does not seem to be due to a hunger for God, but rather a hunger for debate and learning. Desiring to learn can be a good thing, but it does not necessarily make for a hungry heart for the Word of God.



**Question: What is your chief motivation to learn about Christ? Is it for His glory and to know Him? Or is it for yourself? For knowledge? Or just because you find spiritual things interesting?**

### **Read Aloud Acts 17:22-34**

Describe what is happening in your own words.

#### **Acts 17:22-31**

Note Paul's approach to sharing the Gospel with the Athenians:



Common Ground (vs 22)

Paul started out by building a bridge. He complimented them on their efforts towards religion. He acknowledged that they had an interest in God and built a connection with this.  
Romans 3:23, 1 Corinthians 10:13



The Existence of God (vs 23)

After building a connection through their religious efforts, he then pointed to the fact that there is indeed a god, and in fact, Paul knew of the God that they were seeking. Hebrews 11:1-6



The Creator God (vs 24-26)

Paul made it clear that his God was not just a god, but THE God, the creator God. Paul explains that His God is the Lord of all. Hebrews 11:1-6



Designed for Relationship (vs 24-26)

Paul explains that God is not interested in religious works or temples but rather in a relationship with us. God has designed us to desperately seek Him and find Him.  
John 17:3, Genesis 1-3



Scriptural and Cultural (vs 28-29)

Paul presented his arguments both with Scriptural and even cultural knowledge from their day. Titus 1:1-16



God's Grace (vs 30)

Paul exhorts the Athenians that God has looked over their "ignorance and sin" for a period of time. This means that before the time of Jesus, God was not pouring His wrath out on man. Rather, He was overlooking their sin for a period of time to allow them to repent. Ultimately, those who were saved before the cross were saved on "credit," as their sin would be paid for at a later date. Those saved after the cross are saved on debit, as their sins have already been paid for. Romans 3:21-26



Call to Repentance (vs 30)

God's grace should not be used as an excuse to sin but rather a reason to repent!  
Romans 2:1-5



## H Judgment

There is coming a day when God will no longer extend grace and give men time to repent. In fact, there will come a day when the Man Jesus Christ will execute judgment with no mercy for those who have not turned from their sin and believed in the Gospel.

Matthew 16:27, John 5:22-24

## I The Resurrection

Finally, Paul explains that this is all true based on the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This truth is in accordance with the promises of God found in the Scripture, which validated that Jesus was/is the Messiah. 1 Corinthians 15:1-19



**Question: Many of us have heard the Gospel many times, but as you look at how Paul shared the Gospel with the Athenians, what sticks out to you?**

### **Acts 17:32-34**

1

The resurrection of the dead and the simplicity of the Gospel is often the make-or-break point of the Gospel. Many people responded by mocking Paul in accordance with 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. The world sees the Gospel as foolish, too simplistic, and even as comical. However, it is this same simplistic Gospel full of humility that can save a human heart. 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

2

One interesting repeating theme in this section of Acts is that God was in the business of saving people of every social class. He reached people in poverty, people in high standing, and people who were blue-collar workers. Perhaps the most intriguing demographic that the Bible highlights is the women who came to the faith. This would have been very counter-cultural at the time to emphasize the salvation and the importance of women in the Kingdom of God. Although God appoints men and women with different gifts and roles, they are equally important to the execution of God's will. Galatians 3:28



**Question: Why do you think that worldly wisdom and the Gospel are always at odds with one another?**

# Weekly Challenge

Have you ever been equipped and challenged to intentionally examine the Scriptures? We are always told to read our Bible, but how do we actually read the Scripture effectively? If this is something you have never done, or are not very confident in, there are solutions! This week consider reaching out a fellow disciple or a shepherd/teacher who can help you develop this skill. If you feel confident in your ability to do this, is there someone in your life who you can come alongside and equip in this area?

It is easy to fall into apathy as Christians. However, we have a power that is much stronger than apathy. That power is the grace of God. We read in Romans that it is the grace of God that leads us to motivation. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:10 it was the grace of God that empowered Paul on his mission for the Gospel. When you think of the grace of God, what do you think of? Do you think of a power that simply forgives you? Or do you think of a power that changes you? This week, take some time and do a "word study" on grace. Look up every time the word "grace" is used in the New Testament. For each verse jot down what is true about grace according to Scripture. This can be done for free on the Bible APP or Blue Letter Bible.

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# Memory Verse

## **Acts 14:21-23 ESV**

*<sup>21</sup> When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. <sup>23</sup> And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*