**BRINGING THE GOSPEL HOME**

**Lesson 3: Communicating the Message (Acts 17:16-32)**

***Introductory Remarks:***

***We need to have a God-centered motivation for evangelism: A deep desire for God to be treated as he deserves.***

*Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. (17:16)*

* Do you have a deep zeal for God to be treated as he deserves?

*So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. (17:17)*

* Do you think about how you can best glorify God in your responses to the idolatry of this world?

*Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. (17:18)*

* Are you ready to make the gospel public so that you can enter into gospel-focused discussions?

*And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. (17:19-20)*

* Are you constantly growing in your knowledge of God’s Word so that you can faithfully proclaim the gospel to others?

***We need to connect with people at the deepest level: their need to have a completely God-centered life (a right relationship with God).***

*So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown God.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” (17:22-23)*

**Presence, understanding, engagement……**

* “…standing in the midst of the Areopagus…”
* “I perceive that…”
* “…as I passed along and observed…”
* “…I found also…”

**Determining contact points for the gospel…**

* “…you are very religious…”
* “…the objects of your worship…”
* “…an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown God.”
* “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.”

\*\*\*As we move through this message we learn an important point about how we should use these contact points to present the gospel. The contact points that Paul makes are used to show the distinctiveness of the gospel message. It is important to understand this about the message we proclaim. It Is not like what people already believe. It is not simply the adding of a new part to their lives. A lot of times we end up with me-centered, felt-need centered, give-me-what-I-want “Christians” because we are presenting a me-centered, felt-need centered, give-me-what-I-want message. We do need to find connecting points with the people we love and want to reach, but we need to move from there to the distinctiveness of the gospel. That’s what we see in Paul’s message and it is why this message sounds so different to what we commonly hear proclaimed. People need a right relationship with God. One that brings them to become wholehearted worshipers of God. One that leads naturally into an all-encompassing love for God and others.

***We need to faithfully and lovingly proclaim the biblical, God-centered message of the gospel.***

What is the difference between these two statements?

* “The minimum amount of truth to the maximum number of people.”
* “The maximum amount of truth to the maximum number of people.”

**What is the biblical message (“gospel”) that we are called to proclaim?**

1. The gospel is the message of the entire Bible that focuses on Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; 1:18-2:5; Matthew 26:7-13; Romans 2:16).
2. When proclaiming the gospel to those who don’t have a basic understanding of the Bible, we need to be ready to lay a biblical foundation for the message of Jesus (Acts 17:16-34; 14:8-23; Romans 1:16-3:16).

* *“…he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.” (17:18)*
* *“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.” (17:24)*
* *“…nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” (17:25)*
* *“And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place…” (17:26)*
* *…that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In him we live and move and have our being…” (17:27-28a)*
* *“…as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, and image formed by the art and imagination of man.” (28b-29)*
* *“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent…” (17:30)*
* *“…because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (17:31)*

**How can we grow to be better at proclaiming the biblical gospel?**

1. Become a disciplined and prayerful student of the Bible (Theology matters!)
2. Develop a thoroughly biblical worldview (A God-centered understanding of and approach to all of life).

* Seek to connect everything in your life to the Bible and everything in the Bible to life.
* Bombard everything in your life with God-centered questions (Bible-driven questions).
* Demonstrate your love for God and others by constantly growing in your ability to point others to the gospel (a God-centered life in Christ).

1. Trust God to work through you and the gospel (Romans 1:16-17; 10:14-17; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 3:14-4:5).

***We need to adopt a biblical, God-centered standard for evaluating the success of our evangelistic efforts.***

*Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them. (17:32-34)*

* The number of people who make professions of faith (Acts 17:32-34; Mark 4:1-9, 13-20; Matthew 7:13-29, compare 28:16-20).
* Whether or not others approve of your evangelistic efforts (Acts 17:32; Matthew 5:11-16; 10:16-39; Acts 20:22-24, 28-30).
* Whether or not you feel successful (Acts 18:5-11, compare 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

**Success in evangelism is determined by the degree to which our efforts reflect:**

* A wholehearted love for God and others (Acts 17:16-34; Romans 1:8-15; 9:1-3; 10:1; 12:9-21; John 14:15; Matthew 5:3-16; Acts 20:17-38; 1 Corinthians 9:1-27).
* Prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit to work through us as we proclaim the gospel (Acts 20:17-27; Romans 1:16-17; Ephesians 6:18-20).
* Faithful and loving proclamation of the biblical, God-centered message of the gospel (Acts 17:16-34; Romans 1-5; Acts 20:17-27).