



# GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved  
WORLD!

(#11)

The Scripture foundation a person needs  
for understanding the Good News

When telling others about the Good News, **WE MUST:** } **START WITH THE FACTS**

For people NOT familiar with the Bible: → We need to start with the "basics" about God and the Bible, → If we want them to comprehend the rest.

To be more specific, **WE MUST:** } **START WHERE THEIR UNDERSTANDING STOPS**

**TELLING PEOPLE THE GOOD NEWS**  
WHEN THEY HAVE **NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE**

The two main passages with this focus are:

CHAPTER IN ACTS	WHO WAS THE AUDIENCE	FOCUS OF THE GOOD NEWS
14	Gentiles (no knowledge of the Bible)	GOD (some basic foundational issues) [There was no opportunity to say more.]
17b	Gentiles (no knowledge of the Bible); possibly others	GOD (foundational issues); JESUS

(Further insights may be found in other passages.)

**Acts 17:16-34**

**SOME KEY CONCEPTS:**

- You must deal with foundational issues, if their foundation is false.
- When you have an opportunity to preplan, use it! **HOWEVER:**
  - It's still no guarantee that things will work out the way you want, or that large numbers of people will be saved.
- Just like when you can't preplan, leave the results to God!

**BACKGROUND:**

- Because of persecution, Paul went to Athens, while his fellow-workers stayed behind for awhile.

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed when he saw that the city was full of idols.

So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with those who worshiped God, as well as in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 17:16-17 (CSB)

**WHILE WAITING...**

- Paul was distressed by all the false gods that were being worshipped.
- He took every opportunity he could to talk to others about the Good News.

- He talked to Jews, as well as Gentiles (God-fearing and other).

**WHAT CAN WE LEARN?**

**MODERN-DAY IDOLATRY**

- It takes many forms; but includes anything that people give greater emphasis and/or devotion to, than God. (It's not just a statue that people bow down to!)
- Atheism is idolatry: It exalts "nature" above God.
- Many "church-goers" have idols – sports, entertainment, activities, careers, other people, money, ...

Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

1 Corinthians 10:14 (LEB)

Does the idolatry of people around you fill you with concern?  
(Or have you joined them in it?)

*If it concerns you, how do you respond to it?*

### PRESENTING THE GOOD NEWS

- Paul's "Good News" included Jesus and the resurrection.
- Some of the people didn't understand, and would need foundational information about the true God. (This is done in the verses that follow.)

Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also debated with him. Some said, "What is this ignorant show-off trying to say?"

Others replied, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign deities" —because he was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

Acts 17:18 (CSB)

#### THOSE WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND:

- Some responded with mockery.
- Some responded with curiosity.

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- Note the words "debated" (in verse 18) and "reasoned" (in verse 17). Paul is focusing on the "fact" aspect of the Good News. As Paul later told Governor Festus:

What I am saying is true and reasonable.

Acts 26:25b (NIV)

- These facts included historic events that unsaved people could observe. He could confidently say (about King Agrippa):

The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner.

Acts 26:26 (NIV)

Today, those facts are recorded in the Bible.  
How much effort have you taken to know them?

### OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN

They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, and said, "May we learn about this new teaching you are presenting? Because what you say sounds strange to us, and we want to know what these things mean."

Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new.

Acts 17:19-21 (CSB)

- Those who wanted to learn gave Paul an opportunity to explain further.
- Their desire for learning was probably nothing more than curiosity – not a desire for salvation.
- But Paul took the opportunity and left the results to God. (God did save some – v. 34.)

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- In Chapter 14, the apostles did not have an opportunity to preplan what to say. Here, Paul had an opportunity to carefully preplan. This illustrates two "extremes" we may face.

\* In BOTH situations, we can proclaim the Good News... and leave the results to God!

- Even when there is no direct opportunity to share the Good News, our talk (and actions) should be such that it honors God.

Live wisely among those who are not Christians, and make the most of every opportunity.

Let your conversation be gracious and effective so that you will have the right answer for everyone.

Col. 4:5-6 (NLT)

### HAVING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said:

"People of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect.

For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed: 'To an Unknown God.'

Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

Acts 17:22-23 (CSB)

- Note Paul's attitude of respect.

Yes, their idolatry was wrong. But Paul didn't say, "You idiots, can't you see how wrong you are?"

- *At the same time, he did not back away from speaking the truth.*

He said, "I PROCLAIM," not "I SUGGEST."

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- **Beginning with the situation at hand.**

The Athenians admitted that there might be "A GOD" they didn't know – one god among many. Paul was going to tell them about "THE GOD" they didn't know – the only God over all.

- **Having the right attitude.** (As mentioned on the previous page.)

There are times when we must have a different attitude.\* Paul's attitude was a lot different when a false teacher tried to prevent someone from coming to Jesus!

You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?

Acts 13:10 (NIV) – See v. 6-12.

\* (We are normally not in this type of situation.)

## 1. ABOUT GOD, THE CREATOR

(They needed to know about the ONE God who created all things, before being told about Jesus and what he did.)

The God who made the world and everything in it—he is Lord of heaven and earth—does not live in shrines made by hands.

Neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives everyone life and breath and all things.

Acts 17:24-25 (CSB)

### ABOUT THE ONE TRUE GOD:

- He is NOT a part of creation; he is NOT confined to places made by people; he does NOT have needs that we must provide for.
- Rather, he made all things; he rules over all things; he is the giver of all (good) things.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- **Things haven't changed much.** Today, people continue to have false views about how the world was made.  
2 Peter 3:3-7 warns us that people will use their false views about the past as a basis for having false views about the future.

### PAUL'S EXPLANATION

- What Paul said was carefully thought-out and clearly confronts the basic errors of the listeners.
- If we were to analyze every statement Paul made here, we'd discover that his message opposed all the various views of those present.
  - We might not have Paul's teaching skills, but we can benefit greatly from what he said. We can learn what our own focus should be.

## 2. ABOUT HUMANS, THE ONES CREATED

From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live.

He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:26-7 (CSB)

### AS A GROUP, WE HUMANS SHARE:

- EQUALITY – All are equal under God and have equality to each other.
- DEPENDENCY – All are totally dependent on God for all aspects of their existence.

Because of this relationship between God and humans, we have every good reason to WANT to know him! (Any reason to not want to know him is a BAD reason!)

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

- The unsaved may claim that God can't be known (as though it was his fault, rather than their willful ignorance). But ...

### God is here!

- If unsaved people were willing to seek him, they would find him!

### Unfortunately...

There is no one who seeks after God.

Romans 3:11b (WEB)

- The very sins we commit blind us; our sin suppresses our awareness of his presence.

... the sinful mind is hostile to God.

Romans 8:7a (NIV)

... people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, ...

Romans 1:18b (CSB)

## 3. RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE GOD

God made us; we can't make God!

For in him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'

Since we are God's offspring then, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.

Acts 17:28-29 (CSB)

**GOD'S WORKS** in creation and in our lives is EVIDENCE:

- He is here.
- He is greater than anything we can invent.

### • SINCE God is not a created being:

- Don't treat him like one!
- Don't try to reduce him to something you can control!

### • OUR DUTY is to know him and worship him the proper way.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

We should want to know the true, uncreated God, rather than pursuing the fakes we have invented! After all, God's presence permeates our existence!

This should be our goal!

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 4:24 (NASB)

- **We can use illustrations.** We can even quote what someone else says. But quoting someone for the purpose of illustration does NOT mean the person's words become "inspired"!
- **The word "offspring":** In this passage, it does NOT mean we are deity! (That would contradict previous verses, which tell us we are created beings... and God isn't.)

#### 4. ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

- **IN THE PAST:** God let people go their way – living in sin, and rejecting the true God.

Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent,

because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed.

He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.

Acts 17:30-31 (CSB)

- **NOW:** He commands that they repent and be saved.

#### WHY REPENT?

- A day of judgment is coming; the Judge (= Jesus Christ) has been appointed.
- God has guaranteed that this will happen – by raising Jesus (the Judge) from the dead.

#### WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

##### "REPENT" IS A COMMAND (*not* a suggestion).

- The very presence of this command means they have an *opportunity* to do so – an opportunity that previous generations did not have.
- Nobody deserves this opportunity; but if you have it, *don't waste it!* The greater the opportunity, the greater the judgment (if the opportunity is refused).

##### JESUS JUDGING AS A MAN.

- Though he is God, he is also a sinless human – the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

#### THE REJECTION OF THE GOOD NEWS (BY MOST)

- Paul's teaching was interrupted at this point. Most likely he would have said more about Jesus; but was stopped.

When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some began to ridicule him, but others said, "We'd like to hear from you again about this."

So Paul left their presence.

However, some people joined him and believed, including Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Acts 17:32-34 (CSB)

- Though they probably didn't like Paul's previous words, the idea of a "resurrection" probably went "too far" for them to listen any further.
- For many, Jesus' resurrection (which guarantees the coming judgment) is a key "stumbling point."

#### WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

"We'd like to hear more later" could be a polite way of saying "We're tired of listening to you."

##### GOD IS PRESENT AND IS NOT HIDING.

- If a person *did* seek and find God in creation, that would not be enough to save him. WE NEED JESUS to *pay* for our sins, in order for us to be saved.
- Their rejection of what Paul said prevented most of them from hearing about their need for Jesus ... though a few did pursue the matter (and were saved).

## YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Consider what you can learn from this passage (Acts 17:16-34).

We might not be able to present the Good News in the scholarly way that the Apostle Paul did.

But we can learn basic principles from him that will guide our efforts.

## Credits

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