**1. Motivate**

What are some topics you are always ready to talk about?

* kids, grandkids

A video introduction is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_th80s306> . If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/4zpe8668>

* sports
* fishing
* recipes
* weather
* people in the neighborhood

* work
* kids’ school
* news
* shenanigans of the politicians
* your favorite TV quiz shows
* movies you’ve seen

**2. Transition**

Most people are ready to talk about something.

* These conversations can often be opportunities to share Christ.
* Today we look at how Paul did this when he visited Athens

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Be Sensitive to Opportunities

Listen for where Paul speaks.

Acts 17:16-18 (NIV) While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute 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.

What was it that distressed Paul? Why?

* city was “full of idols”
* “wholly given to idolatry”
* we might say “smothered” with them or “swamped” by them
* a veritable “forest” of idols
* upwards of 30,000 images

Why then did Paul go first to the Jewish synagogues?

* point of contact most natural for the message
* people there new the concept of the Messiah
* he knew he would be invited to share

Why do you think he also went to the marketplace?

* lots of people there
* everyone goes shopping
* custom was to meet, greet, discuss, present, and listen for new ideas

Note the background of the two philosophical groups Paul interacted with …

* Epicureans – pursuit of pleasure and materialism
* Stoics – pursue human reason and self-sufficiency

What are examples of how these philosophies are present in today’s culture?

* entertainment industry
* desire to buy more stuff
* get latest gadgets
* litigious mentality (sue anybody for anything where you can make a buck)
* liberal thinkers in universities
* “you can be anything you set your mind to be” attitude
* substance abuse

How are these worldviews in opposition to biblical values and the Gospel message?

* not dependent on God
* seek fulfillment in pleasure, not in a relationship with God
* humanistic attitude … don’t need God, man is his own deity
* atheistic or agnostic mentalities

Paul was not bashful about contacting people with the Good News … Why?

* he was convinced of their lostness
* “greatly disturbed” is a phrase with strong meaning in the Greek
* he knew the seriousness of the problem
* knew the remedy

What are some reasons Christians might give for being unwilling to initiate contacts with lost people to tell them about Jesus?

* don’t know how
* bashful
* scared
* may feel people aren’t all that lost – God will be lenient
* may feel people aren’t all that bad – only really evil and nasty people are lost

⇒ Paul would have rejected all those reasons

3.2 Find a Common Ground

Listen for Paul’s approach for witnessing.

Acts 17:22-23 (NIV) Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 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. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

What additional opportunity surfaced for Paul to share the gospel in a prominent setting?

* Paul went to a place where people spoke and debated about different philosophies
* he was given (or took) the opportunity to speak about his own thoughts and beliefs

What common religious and theological ground did he claim between himself and the people assembled on Mars’ hill?

* he noted how religious the people were … he had carefully observed evidence of that
* he had seen an altar “To an Unknown God”
* suggested that he could tell them about the God they were wanting to know
* found a “steppingstone” to introduce them to Jesus

Why would Paul tell us that Americans are very religious, but still *lost*?

* lots of people do religious things
* there are lots of churches
* we also “worship” lots of things (sports, hobbies, entertainment stars, material things)
* we worship the wrong things – people are lost because they do not know Jesus Christ as savior

How can finding common ground with others lead to doors being opened to share the gospel?

* we establish a connection of commonality
* we and they both have this common interest or experience
* it opens up a thread of conversation that segues into a presentation of the Gospel

What are some areas of commonality between religious and nonreligious people today?

* our experience during the pandemic
* struggles with finances, health problems, kids
* our common interests in sports, hobbies, news events
* all the things we listed earlier … topics we’re always ready to talk about

What right do Christians have to claim they know the *Truth* about God?

* Jesus is the Life, the Truth, the Way – there is no other
* people are condemned to an eternity of hell and separation from God without Jesus
* God has commanded that we Go and preach and make disciples of all peoples

In what ways does God *prepare* us to tell others what God has done in our lives?

* taken us through problems and trials – God helped me in this same thing, let me tell you about it
* our life experience gives us insight to their need
* we have the same interests as they do and this gets us talking together, develops a connection which can lead to spiritual topics

 3.3 Help Others Understand the Truth

Listen for points in Paul’s sermon.

Acts 17:30-31 (NIV) In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 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 all men by raising him from the dead."

What facts about repentance do you find in verse 30?

* God commands people to repent
* This command is for all men everywhere
* The command is effective now

Through whom will God’s righteous judgment be administered?

* God will one day judge the world
* He will bring justice, make things right
* Jesus will be that Judge

By what act did God prove Jesus was worthy to be God’s agent of judgment?

* even though Jesus was executed …
* God raised Him from the dead
* His death, burial, and resurrection not only proved His power and authority …
* it accomplished the possibility that sins can be forgiven
* God can set aside our sin guilt, our spiritual death penalty
* Jesus took the punishment we deserved
* when we repent and receive His forgiveness by believing in what He has done, we are no longer condemned to eternal separation from God

What basic truths are essential when communicating the gospel?

* God’s love for us
* our sinful condition
* Jesus substitutionary death and life-giving resurrection
* our response of repentance and trusting Him for forgiveness

Paul used Athenian culture and ideas to help them see Truth. What are some ways this could happen in our culture?

* use movie clips to make a point about spiritual needs
* use holiday church presentations to invite people – even those from other cultures (they often feel it a privilege that you would include them in your “religious celebration”)
* share personal testimony of how God helped you through tragedies (personal, natural)
* share a book like “40 Days of Purpose” with someone who seems to be searching
* invite friends to Christian musical events (contemporary groups, Southern Gospel, classic presentations)

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Open your heart.

* Pray and ask God to make you aware of the opportunities around you to talk about your faith.
* Pray for a willingness to share Christ with others.

Open your eyes.

* Make a list of areas of interest you share with other people.
* With the list, identify ways those areas of interest could be used to turn the conversation to the gospel.

Open your mouth.

* Be diligent about maximizing your windows of opportunity to share Christ.
* Be intentional in making natural bridges between you and another person to talk about the gospel.

Cryptogram

Out consulate in Rica Niarab intercepted this message over the local secret police radio network. They have been trying to suppress the local church and keep them from hearing this important truth. The partial key above is for the code they used. Do your best to substitute the letters for the message. When you finish, pass the message along to your class member responsible for evangelism. If you need help, go to <https://tinyurl.com/4zpe8668> . Find other activities of intrigue there as well

