

EXPLAINING THE GOSPEL

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

When Paul encountered opposition on his second missionary journey, he did not allow it to stop the spread of the gospel but rather found new opportunities to proclaim the risen Christ.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Acts 17

+ **SETTING:**

After the Jerusalem Council, Paul and his traveling companions took the gospel throughout the Mediterranean to other Jews and Gentiles who had yet to hear of Christ. As they faced opposition, they would move on to another community while seeking to establish believers in the truth of the gospel. The conflicts Paul faced did not stop him from proclaiming Christ but only motivated him to continue to bring the good news to others who would hear and believe.

DAY 1

READ:

Acts 17:11-12

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 17:11-12

NOTES

Go to any major sporting event and you will discover enthusiastic fans. They come dressed in their team's jersey. They know the players and some of the stats. They understand the rules of the game and notice the patterns of the plays. When their team scores, their response is enthusiastic—wild cheering ensues with loud yelps of joy and arms raised in celebration.

How different Sunday mornings can be. The Word of God is preached, but is there excitement? Is there an anticipation of something great about to happen? Or is the body language one of crossed arms, a disengaged heart, a dullness of mind?

Since every word of Scripture has come directly from the mouth of God, Christians ought to be just as eager (if not more so) than the Bereans who heard the word of God. Are we eager to hear? Do we make notes? Do we pray that the Spirit would fill our hearts with wonder? Or are we passive recipients who are wondering what's for lunch after church?

God has given us His Word so that we might receive it, examine it, and believe it by applying it to our lives every day.

How can you prepare yourself to receive the Word of God when it is read or preached?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"Oh, that churches would be filled with people longing more for biblical food than for Sunday-morning cotton-candy entertainment, funny stories, and pithy anecdotes! May God grant us a Berean appetite for the Scriptures."¹

—Tony Merida

DAY 2

READ:

Acts 17:13-18

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 17:16-18

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #87: EVANGELISM

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all thus rests upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle.

The work of apologetics is to give a reasonable defense of the faith. Sometimes people struggle with Christianity because they have preconceived beliefs that make Christianity something they cannot consider. Other times people have objections that they need answers to. Still others have had bad experiences with Christians or churches and have been soured to the truth of the gospel.

In each case, the skeptic needs a reasoned approach. Intellectual answers may satisfy some; philosophical arguments might persuade others. At the end of the day, defending the faith is only part of what people need. Apologetics is simply reasoning with people so that you can present them with the gospel. While apologetics might soften someone's resistance, the gospel is the power of God for the salvation for everyone who believes. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel for this reason (Romans 1:16-17).

Maybe you are skilled at defending the faith. Maybe you feel your need to grow in understanding people's objections so you can answer them. Regardless, there is one thing we need to know—the power of God to save people from sin, death, and hell through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why should evangelism be a priority in our lives and in our churches?

DAY 3

READ:

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

NOTES

If someone were to describe what is most important to them, what might they say? For some people, it might be their job and how devoted they are to their work. Still others might say they are known for their love for their family and how they spend time with them. Still others might describe someone's hobbies or interests as their highest priority.

Paul said he passed on what was most important to the Corinthians and to every other believer—the good news of Jesus Christ. This is what defined his preaching (1 Corinthians 2:1), and it was central to his life. He made it his aim to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This did not mean Paul had no other knowledge. Rather, to know Christ was to know everything; to not know Christ was to have knowledge that did not make sense.

When the gospel becomes our priority, we shape our lives around it. Our beliefs inform our behaviors. And our behaviors and beliefs compel us to speak of Christ and to point to Him in everything that we say and do.

How does the message of the gospel shape your daily life?

DAY 4

READ:

Acts 17:16-23

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 17:22-23

NOTES

All around us today, people do not know if you can know if there is a god. And if there is a god, you can only describe him by your own experience. Some people have compared the personal experience of spiritual things to a group of people who encounter an elephant in a totally dark room. One person feels the leg of the elephant and thinks that it is a tree. Others feel the tail and think it is a branch. Others feel the side of the elephant and think they have run into a wall.

The problem with this kind of thinking is that it assumes that someone sees the whole elephant even though everyone else cannot. Similarly, many people claim that there are many paths to God, as if they are on different routes up the same mountain. Again, this assumes that someone sees where all the paths ultimately go.

As Christians, we have this confidence: the unknown can be known. The room is not dark; the paths are not all headed in the same direction. God has made Himself known, and because He has made Himself known in Jesus Christ, we can have confidence that the unknown God is knowable by His Word.

How can you know God more personally today?

DAY 5

READ:

Acts 17:24-31

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 17:25

NOTES

God isn't in need of us. He is complete and sufficient in Himself. He didn't create us because He was lonely or because He lacked servants to do tasks for Him. God didn't create us so that He would have someone to worship Him, serve Him, or make Him happy. Before time began, He was happy and complete in Himself. In perfect harmony of relationship as Father, Son, and Spirit, He had perfect love and joy. This means that God is already happy and fulfilled. He has everything He needs. He created us out of His abundance not because of any lack.

Sometimes we behave like we are the ones doing God a favor. We act as if He needs us to perform tasks for Him. We give ourselves credit and try to feel important when we think we have done something significant for God. The reality is that we are the recipients of His kindness. We are not the creator, He is. We do not give God grace; it is God who gives grace to us.

We are prone to turn everything around and make it about ourselves. For this reason, Paul made known to the Athenians the reality of the self-sufficient God. It's a good thing that He is self-sufficient. It reminds us that we need Him every day. And in our need, we can glorify His self-sufficiency.

How do you need God today?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"It would be wrong for us not to proclaim the hidden God who has revealed himself in and through Christ. Were we to stop doing so, we would be denying other people the right to revelation."²

—Babu Immanuel
Venkataraman

POINT 1: The gospel is explained to those who are eager (Acts 17:10-15).

The Bereans not only heard the Word that was preached, but they received it, examined it, and believed it. This attitude should be ours as well.

? How can we be like the Bereans?

Because the Bereans were eager to hear and believe, the disciples poured into these hungry souls and shared the gospel with them.

? How can we minister to others with the Word?

POINT 2: The gospel is defended to those who are skeptical (Acts 17:16-18).

Paul made it his aim to reason with people who did not know the gospel but had religious leanings and questions.

? What methods should we use to reason with people who have questions about the Christian faith?

KEY DOCTRINE #87: EVANGELISM

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of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle.

? From Day 2: **Why should evangelism be a priority in our lives and in our churches?**

POINT 3: The gospel is proclaimed to those who are seeking (Acts 17:19-29).

There will always be people who are ready to listen to the gospel, whether they choose to believe or not.

? **What are some reasons those yet to believe would want to listen to the gospel message?**

When presented with an opportunity to speak about Christ, we do so with respect, reason, and a connection with our audience.

? **Why do we sometimes not have more passion and intentionality to share the gospel?**

MY RESPONSE

Because we have come to know God through Jesus, we look in our culture for ways that we might be able to point others to the gospel so that they too might move from ignorance and disbelief to knowledge and faith in Christ.

- **HEAD:** What are some ways our culture allows doors to be open to speak about Christ?
- **HEART:** How can I have compassion for those who are without Jesus Christ?
- **HANDS:** Who is someone that needs Christ that I could pray for today?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"We've a message to give to the nations,
That the Lord who reigneth above
Has sent us His Son
to save us,
And show us that God is love,
And show us that God is love!"³

—H. Ernest Nichol (1862–1926)