

Wise Witness | Acts 17

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Lee | The Falls Church Anglican
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(Discussion questions on page 17)

Introduction:

- There's a story in a book about missionaries who a long time ago tried to reach the people on an island north of Australia called Papua New Guinea.
- And these missionaries had a deep desire and passion to see the people in Papua New Guinea come to know Jesus.
- So to share the Gospel of Jesus, they would go a village and then stand right in the middle of the village and start preaching with great passion.
- Now, they did this because this is how everyone used to share the Gospel in their home country back in that time.
- This is what they knew; what they were familiar and comfortable with.
- But the problem was that in the context and culture of Papua New Guinea back then, when someone in the village was upset and wanted to reduce his or her stress, that person would stand in the middle of the village and would start yelling and berating other people. It was basically a way to get things off their chest.
- Thus, when a person stood in the middle of the village to rant and rave and yell, no one took that person or that message seriously. Because it was simply a way to reduce stress.
- Well, you can imagine what happened when these missionaries tried to share the gospel by preaching with great fervor in the middle of the village.
- The villagers didn't take the missionaries very seriously and completely ignored the message; Why? Because they thought the missionaries were just some seriously stressed people.
- Now, if the missionaries had taken the time to really understand that culture, they would have realized that if a message was TRULY important, the message would FIRST be shared with the older men of that village and THEN it would be communicated in the solitude of their homes.
- So, why do I share this story?

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- Well, so often, as individuals and as churches, though we may be very passionate about reaching people for Jesus, we can at times become like the missionaries in this story: passionately preaching in the middle of the village, THINKING we are being effective witnesses for Jesus, when in fact, we are being completely ignored by the world around us.
- Why? Because we failed to not only **understand** our culture and context, but also have not **adapted** our approach to fit that context.
- Even as I think about the DMV area, there are so many wonderful, well-intentioned churches who passionately do a lot of activities, spend tons of money, thinking that if they just have the right programs, the right preacher, the right music, or the right building, that the non-believing world around them would automatically flock to church and immediately become followers of Jesus; sort of like the Field of Dreams mentality: “build it and they will come.”
- But has this really happened? Are we seeing tons of non-believers “eager” to come to church and become followers of Jesus? OR... are we in some ways more like the missionaries in the story?
- Now, this is NOT a condemnation of the wonderful churches in this area, including our own, but just a reality check.
- But even on an individual basis, many of us think that if we just have the right apologetics, or share the right bible verses, say the right things, that non-believers in our workplace, school, or neighborhood will automatically come to faith in Jesus.
- Not that God CAN'T use any of this, because God can use **anybody** and **any-thing** to bring people to Himself, but oftentimes, we as individuals and as churches can “miss the mark” when it comes to reaching people for Christ.
- And without us realizing it, we end up like the missionaries preaching in the middle of the village: Well-intentioned and passionate, but completely ignored.
- So, the question is: How do we prevent this from happening?
- How do we instead become not only WISE, but EFFECTIVE in our witness for Jesus both individually and as a church?
- So that people around us would not only be DRAWN to Jesus, but many would come to know Him as THEIR Savior.
- Well, this is the question I want to explore with us this morning.

- And to help answer this question, we're going to look at an example given by probably one of the greatest and most effective missionary evangelists in Scripture, and that's the Apostle Paul.
- *Specifically*, I want us to see **HOW** Paul reached people in **HIS** day, through a quick snapshot found in **Acts 17**, and draw out some principles that will help us in **OUR** witness today.
- Now, just a caveat: There is a LOT to unpack in this chapter, so for our brief time this morning, I'll just point out a few lessons and principles.
- So, with that in mind, let's dive right in.

Principle 1: *Wise witnesses contextualize without compromise*

- The First Principle or Lesson from Apostle Paul found in Acts 17: ***IF we want to become WISE and effective witnesses for Jesus, we need to learn how to CONTEXTUALIZE the Gospel without COMPROMISING its' message.***
- *Now, what do I mean by this? And where do we see this?*
- Well, first, if we want to be wise and effective witnesses for Jesus, we need to take the time to not only **UNDERSTAND** who we are trying to reach, but also, **ADAPT** our outreach accordingly: Just like the missionaries in the story **should** have done.
- Now, the technical term for this is called "**contextualization**." It's a missionary term that we often use, but we all know what it is because we do this ALL the time.
- *For instance*, when we go to work, we **adapt** our speech, clothing, and behavior to that environment because we **understand** that our work context is very different from a cookout with our family or friends.
- It's two different worlds. And so we adapt, or contextualize, accordingly.
- Even in the way we teach children on Sundays at the church. We adapt, or contextualize the curriculum and teaching so that it is appropriate and understandable for specific age groups. That's why we don't give the same teaching to second graders as we do seniors in high school.
- So, whether we're aware or not, we're **constantly** contextualizing; **constantly** adapting, depending on who we're with or where we are.
- Well, this is precisely what Paul does in **Chapter 17**.
- We see that in the first half of this chapter, which we didn't read in its' entirety due to the length of the passage, Paul reaches out to two different groups of people.

- In **vs. 1-4**, and feel free to look at these verses, Paul shares the Gospel with Jewish people as well as God-fearing Greeks in the city of Thessalonica.
- And what we see is that these folks were devout Jews and Greeks who had a ***foundation of biblical knowledge***. However, they were somewhat “skeptical” about Jesus being the Messiah.
- So... in light of WHO these people were and that specific context, Paul adapted his outreach by first going to where they were, which was the synagogue in **vs. 2**.
- And then he “reasoned” with them and “explained” to them and “proved” to them that Jesus was the Messiah ***from the Scriptures***.
- ***In other words***, because Paul KNEW and understood that the Thessalonians had a biblical foundation, were God-fearing, and believed in God’s Word, that what these “skeptics” needed was simply “***proof***” FROM Scripture itself.
- But then in **vs. 10-12**, Paul reaches out to a second different group of people known as the Bereans who were also Jewish and God-fearing.
- Yet, what we see in **vs. 11** was that they were “eager” to know the truth and they “examined” the Scriptures every day.
- In other words, they were genuine and open “seekers.”
- And what Paul realized was that all that these Bereans needed was a “nudge” and so he simply PRESENTED the Gospel.
- He didn’t need to debate, reason, or prove. He simply needed to PRESENT.
- As a result, we see that “many” of the Bereans came to faith in Jesus because they were ‘ready’ to believe.
- So... with the religious skeptics in Thessalonica he needed to PROVE. But with the genuine open Berean seekers, he just needed to PRESENT.
- ***In other words***, he contextualized and adapted the message of the gospel, that is, packaged it in a different way for the different groups. YET without “compromising” the essential message of the Gospel.

Now, on a side note:

- > The way Paul reached out to these two groups is how evangelism was primarily done in the U.S. many years ago.

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- > Because for a long time, the general public had “some” basic knowledge of the Bible.
- > The U.S. was in the past considered somewhat of a “Christian” nation.
- > And there was generally either a “neutral” or even at times “positive” view of Christianity. Now, that was a LONG time ago...
- > So the evangelism strategies back in the day focused on providing “**proof**” from Scripture and focused on “nudging” people to Jesus by simply **presenting** the Gospel.
- > So there were tools like Evangelism Explosion, 4 Spiritual Laws, the Bridge Illustration, Romans Road, or books like Evidence that Demands a Verdict. Some of you are probably familiar with these resources.
- > Now, they are still very good resources, and I use them even today for specific groups of people, BUT, they were created for a specific context and time.
- > **However**, in the past few decades, as the U.S. and especially major cities in the U.S. have become more and more **secularized**, people have become less and less exposed to the Bible, and somewhat more antagonistic to Christianity.
- > However, at the same time, people more than ever are open to “spiritual” things, but just not institutionalized religion.
- > And as some have suggested, we have become a “post” Christian nation. Especially in the larger metropolitan areas.
- > Well, the result of this is that the ways we USED to share the gospel by simply **proving** or **presenting** are becoming less and less effective, because these tools assumed **some** foundation of biblical knowledge, **some** belief in absolute truth, and **somewhat** neutral or positive view of Christianity.
- > But this is NOT the case today in much of the U.S.
- > But the problem is that for many churches and many Christian ministries are still trying to reach the non-believing world in the way we **used** to reach people decades ago, not understanding that the world is quite different.
- > And as a result, have become more like the missionaries in the story than the Apostle Paul.
- > We THINK that we’re making a difference by passionately preaching in the middle of the village when in fact we are being completely ignored.

- But how do we make sure we're NOT like the missionaries in the story?
- How do we adapt and contextualize the Gospel, without compromising it, so that it fits our CURRENT day and age; our CURRENT context and culture?
- Well, I think the answer lies in the way Paul reaches out to the THIRD group in this chapter, which were the Athenians. And we read about them in vs. 16-34.
- Now, the Athenians were quite different from the Thessalonians and Bereans because they were part of a culture and context where there was NO biblical foundation and no belief in the one true God.
- On the contrary, they believed in “many gods.”
- As well, Athens was the cultural and intellectual center of the world and quite secular in their thinking.
- In other words, Athens was like the metropolitan areas of the U.S. today, including Washington D.C.
- So, how did Paul ADAPT his outreach to THIS group of people?
- Well, first, notice what Paul does NOT do.
- He doesn't begin with a condemnation of their way of life, their unbiblical values, or their faulty worldview.
- He doesn't begin with: “Hey you, immoral secular people who are going to hell...” Like those people trying to evangelize on street corners by wearing condemning billboards yelling at people walking by.
- But instead, he begins by affirming a **positive** aspect of their culture and **then** finds a way to connect with that culture.
- Notice how Paul begins by pointing out in vs. 22, they the Athenians very “spiritual.” He says, “I perceive that in every way you are very religious.”
- He affirms that the Athenians are a people who are quite spiritual and open to spiritual things, which is a good thing because it means they are open to God and ‘want’ to know the truth.
 - > And this is true for many people in the world today: They may not like institutionalized religion, but they ARE quite “spiritual” and open to spiritual things. People ARE open to God and ‘want’ to experience something transcendent.

- > And you all probably know LOTS of people who are like this: I'm not interested in church or institutionalized religion, but I am open to 'spiritual' things and believe that there 'is' something beyond what we can see, touch, taste, and feel.
 - > And that's a "good" thing because it leaves an open door to experience the one TRUE God and His love for them.
 - > And this is an important reminder. Because at times, we as Christians can BEGIN with a negative attitude to the culture around us.
 - > We can BEGIN with a condemnation of the unbiblical values of this society and begin with the negative attitude.
 - > But what that does is that it immediately puts up a barrier and makes it really difficult to share the gospel.
 - > So, like Paul, we need to be willing to see and affirm the positive aspects of people and the culture FIRST.
 - > Like Paul, we need to affirm when folks are "spiritual" though "secular" like these Athenians.
- But Paul doesn't stop there.
 - After he affirms that the Athenians are religious, he then finds a point of **connection** with that culture.
 - That is, Paul doesn't immediately quote Scripture to try and PROVE or PRESENT like he did with the Thessalonians or Bereans.
 - Notice in **vs. 23**, where Paul points to something that is a part of their culture, an altar to an "unknown God".
 - Now, without going into ALL of the details, it was basically their "just in case god."
 - Because the Athenians had a god for everything and they wanted a god "just in case" they missed something.
 - Additionally, Paul uses a secular cultural reference in **vs. 28** by quoting one of their own poets, who is NOT a follower of Jesus. It's like me using a secular song lyric or a quote from a secular movie to make a connection with a non-believer.
- > Now, this again is a critical point as WE try and become wise witnesses for Jesus.

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- > Because if we really want to reach a secular but spiritual culture with the Gospel, we can't approach the culture by coming in with a holier than thou attitude, condemning the unbiblical values, and just start quoting Scripture.
- > Instead, we need to begin with where the culture IS and then find points of connection SO THAT we can eventually point them to Jesus.
- > One example of this is how the Pastor of Outreach at my previous church sought to reach the community around Houston.
- > Instead of just going around and passing out Gospel tracks, he began hosting several connecting point events such as Movies and Faith Night where church members would invite non-believing friends to watch a popular movie together and then have discussions on how the movie may relate to faith; He also hosted TED talk nights, where they would watch a popular TED talk and then connect it to the Christian faith; Other activities includes free Tacos in the park where they would hand out tacos and just begin conversations with people.
- > And AS non-believers became more interested in Christianity, he would invite them to a deeper study of the Christian faith.
- > And there has been some amazing results from this sort of outreach.
- > And it's because this pastor began with where people were on their spiritual journey, and without condemnation, invited them to explore the Christian faith in a way that was relatable and accessible.
- And this is what Paul does in this Chapter with these Athenians.
- He met them where they were in their spiritual journey, found points of connection with them, and THEN he shared the Gospel.
- But even in his sharing of the Gospel, it wasn't your typical, "You are a sinner and you need a Savior; and Jesus is the one who died you're your sins," though he DOES get to repentance and faith in vs. 30.
- But instead, Paul presents a Gospel that includes God as the Creator of all things and the source of all life in vs. 24. Then he talks about the ultimate purpose of God in vs. 27.
- And THEN presents the essential message of the Gospel in vs. 30 and 31. But the CONCLUDES with the final judgment.
- In other words, for this secular but spiritual audience, Paul presented the Gospel that wasn't just focused on Justification, but a Gospel that included God's creation, his

intention for humanity, AND how God intends to restore and correct all things at the Final Judgment.

- It was a Gospel that was about the Kingdom of God, not just about Justification, which are not mutually exclusive.
- Now, without going down this rabbit trail of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of Justification, because that's a WHOLE 'nother sermon, but the point here is that Paul didn't JUST focus on the forgiveness of sins and the cross.
- He presented the larger story of the Gospel that includes God creating this world and His desire to restore it to where it should be; to heal not just OUR personal brokenness caused by sin, but to heal and restore ALL that was lost and messed up because of sin. And that one day there will be a final judgment where God's justice will prevail and creation will be restored.
- Now, why is this important? And why is it relevant for us today?
- Well, I believe that in this day and age, especially in the younger generation, what people need to hear isn't JUST about the need to be forgiven from sin, which is essential, but people need to hear the larger story of the Gospel.
- They need to hear how God who created the whole world has a purpose for us and desires that ALL be in a right relationship with Himself.
- But that life is broken and we are broken because of sin.
- But through Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection, as we repent of our sins and trust in Him, not only can WE be personally forgiven and saved, but through Jesus, this entire messed up world will one day be made right and whole.
 - > This was one of the points that a friend of mine, James Choung, who serves with InterVarsity, mentioned in his book about reaching different generations.
 - > James talks about how in THIS day and age, when we present the gospel, we need to present the larger story of the gospel.
 - > That we need to not just talk about our sin and our need for personal forgiveness, but we need to talk about the truth that God through Jesus wants to restore ALL that was broken and lost because of the fall.
 - > And James created an evangelism tool that InterVarsity now uses that has sort of replaced the 4 Spiritual Laws that we used to use in the past.
 - > And what James has found is that non-believing students in the campuses all around the world are resonating and responding to this larger story of the

Gospel. And he has shared how SO many are becoming followers of Jesus as a result.

- For us this morning, I think this is important for us to consider as WE seek to reach our current culture and society.
- We can't JUST focus on the fact that we are sinners in need of forgiveness, though we DO need to talk about that.
- But when we share the Gospel, I think we need to share the "Kingdom" oriented Gospel as well: A Gospel that talks about not only about our own brokenness but the brokenness of humanity that God wants to restore through Jesus.
- That the Gospel is about the Rule and Reign of God that will make everything that is messed up 'right' again. That all the pain of this world 'will' be healed; and that it is only through Christ, all this can happen.
- I think this is "one" of the ways that we as individuals and as churches need to "contextualize" without "compromising" the Gospel message.
- **Connect:**
- OK... some specific application time: What does this mean for us on an individual level as well as a corporate level?
- **One practical application for us as individuals:** If REALLY want to be wise and effective in our outreach to others, I think that the first thing we need to learn how to do is simply LISTEN and LEARN.
- That is, instead of trying to just "prove" the validity of the Gospel or treating people around us like some evangelism projects, we need to just listen and learn.
- We need to hear what non-believers around us really think about Christianity and Christ; the real questions they have; and their deepest needs.
- THEN, as we seek to UNDERSTAND, we can begin to ADAPT our message accordingly without compromising the essence of the Gospel.
- So focus on LISTENING and LEARNING before PRESENTING.
- **On a corporate level,** I think the challenge is the same. We need to be asking the question: Are we taking the time to really listen to the non-believing world around us or are we in too much of a hurry to just present or prove?
- Also, are we answering questions that the non-believing world simply don't have?

- Because one of the saddest things that can happen to us as a church is to become like the missionaries in the story, who THINK we're being effective witnesses to our community, when in fact, we might be completely ignored.

Principle 2: *Wise witnesses have an EVERYDAY and EVERYWHERE faith.*

- The lesson or principle from Paul's example in this chapter is that ***wise and effective witnesses have an EVERYDAY and EVERYWHERE type of faith.***
- *What do I mean by this?*
- Well, simply that faith in Jesus isn't supposed to be just relegated to our Sunday worship or Midweek Small group, or the confines of this building, but instead should impact, influence, and be brought into our everyday living.
- Or as Sam said before, our faith needs to go from the Sanctuary to the Living Room – this was the point of the Liturgy Boxes.
- THIS is when we become more effective witnesses.
- *But, where do we see this in the passage?*
- Well, in **vs. 17**, notice it says that Paul not only “reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks,” but he also went into the “**marketplace**” every day to share the Gospel.
- Now, the important thing to note is that the “marketplace” referred to here is not just a place to buy groceries.
- Back then, the “marketplace” was the center of the city where pretty much EVERYTHING happened.
- It was the place where art, entertainment, government, business, and religion were all front and center.
- In other words, this is where ***everyone did everything*** in their lives.
- And it was into THIS arena that Paul presented the Gospel.
- **Connect:**
- I think this is important for us to grasp.
- Because the implication is that our faith in Jesus isn't supposed to be a “private” faith relegated to one- or two-day a week within the confines of a church building; that is, it isn't supposed to just be a “**synagogue**” type of faith.

- Instead, our faith is a faith that is supposed to influence, shape, and be at the center of **every** area of our lives, whether it's our work, school, sports, or entertainment – that is, it's supposed to be a “**Marketplace**” type of faith.
- Because it's when our faith goes from the “synagogue” or “Sanctuary” to the “marketplace” our outreach will become more effective.
- Why? Because people will see that our faith not only **matters** to us, but it actually makes a **difference** in our lives: in the way we study, the way we work, the way we spend our free time, money, and resources; and the way we respond to suffering and difficult times.
- And ultimately, that's what the the world wants to see: They want to know whether our faith simply MATTERS to us, or if it actually makes a DIFFERENCE.
- Does it make a difference in the way we see our careers, prioritize our families, make ethical decisions, treat difficult co-workers or bosses?
- Does it make a difference when we go through difficult times or do we respond to difficulty like the rest of the world?
- Or does it just “matter” to us on Sundays?
 - > One of the best examples of a person with an EVERYDAY and EVERYWHERE type of faith is the brother of one my best friends.
 - > His name is James and was a very smart, successful person who worked in a company in Washington D.C. awhile back.
 - > He was very good at his job, but more importantly, James sought to live out his faith in the EVERYDAY and EVERYWHERE.
 - > Now, he didn't go around passing out Gospel pamphlets, and he didn't try to force a spiritual conversation every time he would meet someone at the water cooler, but he **did** work with integrity, diligence, and treated people in a way that was quite different from everyone else.
 - > And I remember visiting him as a teenager at his work, and I vividly recall him sharing with me how he saw his office as his “sanctuary.”
 - > Because he saw his job as a way to glorify Christ by the WAY he worked, HOW he made decisions and treated others, and his attitude WHILE he worked.
 - > He saw his work as a way to ‘worship’ God.

- > So... he would pray every day before beginning his work.
- > As well, as He wanted to glorify God in the everyday and everywhere he noticed that there were lots of homeless people right outside his building.
- > As he prayed about it, he was led to make meal bags for them after work. And he would pass out the bags and spend time getting to know them and share Christ with them.
- > And because he was also a volunteer at the youth group at church, he invited some of the students to join him.
- > I was one of the students who went with him.
- > And it was the **way** that James lived his faith out OUTSIDE of church on Sundays that made an impact not only on the lives of the people he worked with, the homeless around his building, and the youth students at the church, but my own life.
- > Because he showed a faith that not only mattered to him on Sundays, but a faith that made a difference Monday through Saturday.
- > I saw a faith that was EVERYDAY and EVERYWHERE.
- > And this is what drew people to Jesus through James.
- > Interestingly, God eventually called James and his family to become missionaries overseas to reach Muslims in Central Asia because James FIRST learned how to be a missionary here in DC in the marketplace.
- But this is the call and the challenge for ALL of us today; that our faith wouldn't just be a "synagogue" or "Sunday only" type of faith, but a "marketplace" type of faith that impacts the everyday and the everywhere.
- Because when THAT happens, it will begin to impact people around us, including non-believers.
- Because it will show that our faith doesn't just MATTER, but actually makes a DIFFERENCE.
- And THIS is when we will become WISE and EFFECTIVE witnesses for Jesus.

Principle 3: Wise witnesses keep the focus on Jesus.

- Well, the third principle that I see here about being a wise and effective witness is that wise and effective witnesses **keep their message focused on Jesus.**

- Yes, Paul shared the larger story of the Gospel to the Athenians, but when you look at this chapter and his outreach to all three groups, ultimately the center and focus of his message WAS Jesus.
- As Paul declares in **vs. 3**, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, IS the Christ.” And as the Athenians noted in **vs. 18**, Paul was focused on preaching “Jesus and the resurrection.”
- And then in **vs. 31**, Paul talks about Jesus as the one who will judge the world in righteousness and who has been raised from the dead.”
- *In other words*, Paul wasn't focused on trying to convert people to a different set of beliefs, a new way of life, a new standard of morality, but to a person - the one who came to save them from their sins and restore all that was broken.
- And I know this is quite basic, but so important. Because to Paul, Christ WAS the Good News. Thus, Jesus was the focus and center of his message and his evangelism.
- Because more than anything else, Paul's deep desire was to see people coming to know and love this Jesus who died for them.
- And without diverging too much, we see this singular, laser-like, focus and passion throughout **every** letter that Paul wrote.
- *For instance*, in **1st Corinthians 2:2** Paul says: “*For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*”
- Or **Philippians 3:8** where he says: “*I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.*”
- And **Philippians 1:21** where Paul says: “to live IS Christ..” That is, the essence of living *is* Jesus.
- In other words, for Paul, knowing, loving, becoming like, and showing Jesus to the world was his singular purpose and passion.
- And it was because of this focus on the person and work of Christ that I believe His witness was so effective.
- Because as I mentioned, Paul's message wasn't to convert people to a new set of morality, a new way to live, a way to a happier and more fulfilling life, it was to draw people into a personal authentic relationship with the one who loved them enough to die for them.

○ **Connect:**

- And this is I think where so many churches and Christians sometimes miss the mark when it comes to reaching the non-believing world around us.
- Because at times, and it's oftentimes unintentional, we focus on trying to convert people to a new belief system, or to just adopt a new set of values, or a different worldview, or even wonderful traditions.
- And these are not bad things, but how often we lose sight of what it means to really be a Christian: that we are people who are not only saved by Jesus, but follow Him in the every day and everywhere.
- And we forget sometimes that Christian life isn't all that complicated; that when you strip away everything; all the activities, programs, traditions, and duties, that it's simply about being saved by the one who loved us enough to die for our sins; and that in response, all we want to do is get to know Him, be with Him, love Him, and make Him known in this world.
- And again, I know it's so basic, but how often "evangelism" in churches is just about "getting people to church" or just having a different set of beliefs that will give us a ticket to heaven.
- Instead of a call to know and love the one who paid the penalty for our sins.
- I love the original mission statement of the Navigators Ministry which states that: Our purpose is simply to **KNOW Christ and MAKE HIM KNOWN.**
- That's what it's all about.
- ***I think this is one of the main messages that God has for us this morning, not only as a church, but as individual followers of Jesus.***
- That as a church, we wouldn't forget what it's all about. Because it's easy at times to get a bit lost because of all the programs and activities.
- I believe God would want us to remember and to make sure that the center and focus and purpose of ALL of our activities, ALL the programs, ALL the wonderful ministries, big and small, is to help people know, love, follow, and share Jesus with the world around us.
- That the focus would be "JUST JESUS."
- That this would be the driving force and motivation in all that we do.

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- That our desire wouldn't be just to increase in size, have more people attending, or become a more influential church, which are not bad things, but it's JUST JESUS.
- That we as a church would have a singular, laser-like, passion like Paul to simply "know Christ and make Him known."
- That everything else would be secondary.
- That's when I think that we will become a church who are NOT like the missionaries in the story, but instead like Paul.
- But this isn't just the application for our church. It's the application for our personal lives.
- That OUR Christian faith wouldn't simply about having a different set of values from the rest of the world, or just trying to live a better and more fulfilling life, but the center and focus would "JUST be Jesus."
- That OUR singular passion and purpose, like Paul, would be to "know Christ and make Him known."
- That THIS would be the center and priority of all that we do.
- For us this morning: Maybe a good question to ask ourselves as we begin this new year is: What really is the focus and center of OUR Christian lives?
- Is it just about having the right set of beliefs, of living a moral life, or doing a lot of religious things, OR is it really about knowing this Jesus, who loved us enough to die for us, who gave us a meaning, purpose, joy, and love that this world couldn't give?
- Do we have a singular, laser-like focus like Paul, to simply KNOW Christ and make Him known?
- That's my prayer, not only for all of you, but for myself and my family.
- May this be the 'heartbeat' of TFCA in all that we do.

Discussion Questions

Read the entire chapter noting the way Paul evangelized the different groups (Acts 17)

Question 1: *What would it look like for us (individually and as a church) to really understand our culture and context, not just in Falls Church but wherever we work and live? What would it look like to ADAPT the Gospel to that context without compromise?*

Question 2: *What would it look like to have a faith that wasn't just a "synagogue" (Sunday only) type of faith, but a "marketplace" type of faith (i.e. an "everyday" and "everywhere" type of faith)? What practical steps can we take?*

Question 3: *As we reflect on our Christian lives, what is the main focus and center? What practical steps can we take to keep as the main focus, "To Know Christ and Make Him Known?"*