Harvester Christian Church

Life Groups | **PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY**

ACTS | Powered by the Spirit | Spirit Powered Conversations

**WEEK 11 – ACTS 17**

Last week we discussed the fact that Paul and his companions were ready to share the good news at all times. In Philippi they didn’t plan to meet a group of women at a place of prayer and they certainly didn’t expect to be thrown in jail. But, because they were ready to share the gospel whenever the opportunity came about, Lydia, the town jailer, and others related to them came to faith in Christ.

This week, as we read about Paul leaving Philippi and continuing on his journey, we are going to focus on **Spirit Powered Conversations**. We will see that the Apostle Paul provides for us a good model of how to talk to others about the Lord. **Pray for wisdom and understanding and then read Acts 17.**

Twice in chapter 17 (verses 2 & 17) Luke says Paul was “reasoning” with the Jews. This word is coupled with other words like “explaining” and “proving”. It means “to think about or ponder, and then debate”.

* We read last week that we are all to be ready to give reasons (make a defense) for the hope that we have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). What do the following verses warn against?
  + Titus 3:9
  + 2 Timothy 2:23
* What is the difference between getting into worthless arguments and “reasoning” with people about our faith?

**Paul in Berea (17:10-15)**

Being ready to share our faith requires a basic familiarity with the teachings of the Bible.

* For what two things were the Bereans commended? (17:10-12)
* What would be some of the consequences of having churches full of people who were not regularly familiarizing themselves with the contents of God’s word?

**Paul in Athens (16-34)**

From Berea, Paul then traveled to Athens. This city was a place where literature, science, philosophy, and rhetoric flourished. It attracted philosophers and other intellectuals from all over the world and was the home of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to name a few. Luke gives us this important insight: “All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas” (17:21).

* Paul was distressed to see the city full of idols (17:16). Write a brief description about what the following passages say about idolatry and why it was and is such a problem.
  + Exodus 20:3-6
  + Jonah 2:8
  + Leviticus 19:4
  + Psalm 135:15-18
* We read in this passage about Epicurean and Stoic philosophers and a group called the Areopagus. What can you discover about each of them? A Bible Dictionary is a great place to look. If you don’t have one, go to **StudyLight.Org**, click on “**Bible study tools**” then “**dictionaries**”. Try the Bridgeway Bible Dictionary and write a few notes about each of these.
  + Epicureans
  + Stoics
  + Areopagus
* The sermon Paul preaches before these philosophers (17:22-31) demonstrates the importance of thinking about **WHO** you are talking to before you decide **HOW** to tell them about Jesus. If you haven’t already done so, take a minute to read Paul’s sermon to a more Jewish audience in Acts 13:16-41. Notice the incredible number of references he makes there to important people and events from the Old Testament. Now, compare that to the way he addresses the philosophers in Athens.
  + Though distressed by all the idols in the city, what is Paul’s opening line (17:22)?
  + How many references does he make to people in the Old Testament here?
  + Who does he quote from instead (17:28)?
  + Even though he takes a different route to get there, he ends up in a familiar place. What does he call these men to do in response to hearing the truth about Jesus (17:30)?

**Challenge for the week**

There are many scriptures that can be used to share the gospel with someone. Memorize these verses from Romans this week and pray for opportunities to share them with others.

Romans 3:23

Romans 5:8

Romans 6:23

Romans 10:9-10

**Discussion Questions**

Was there anything in the reading or teaching time you wanted to discuss this week?

There are different ways to talk to people about the Lord. When have you seen the following be effective: Sharing a testimony? An intellectual approach (giving reasons to believe)? Meeting someone’s physical needs in order to start a spiritual conversation?

Reasoning with others is good and helpful but getting into foolish debates is harmful and to be avoided. How can we tell the difference?

Paul’s opening line in his sermon before the Areopagus showed respect, even though idolatry was a serious issue that needed to be confronted. What can we learn from that in regard to how we approach people in our neighborhood, family, or workplace?