

STUDY GUIDE:

Foundations - Acts 17

May I Ask You A Question?

This week we hit an amazing conversation between Paul and a very spiritual culture, but not a Christian culture. How would you talk about Jesus in Paul's position in Athens? It may not be any different than talking about Jesus in our world today.

For Starters:

What's more important, demonstration of faith or proclamation? Would you be following Jesus without one or the other shown/spoken to you? Which would you rather do... demonstrate or proclaim faith in Christ?

What was the last conversation you had about Jesus with someone who didn't believe in or follow Jesus? What was it like? How did that conversation start?

If we can't recall a recent conversation, why is that? Why do we not talk about Jesus? Do we have friends that believe differently than we do? Should we?

Acts 17:16-31 Talking about Jesus in a non-Jesus world...

Paul is now in Athens — a culture that does not share his history, values, or beliefs. What was normal in Jerusalem, conversations about one God, rabbis, messiahs, and who Jesus was, were foreign concepts in Athens. No one agreed that was just one God, or exactly what sin was, or even that 'sin' needed to be taken away. Are you relating here?

This is us today. Talking about Jesus in church is pretty easy, but engaging the community with the good news of Jesus can be difficult because so many people have completely different concepts of God, humanity, right, wrong, eternity, and just about everything else.

Let's read this passage, and listen for how Paul navigates this conversation, how he connects with their culture and values, and what we can learn about 'Talking about Jesus in a non-Jesus world': Read Acts 17:16-31

1. How do you see Paul showing respect to their faith from the very start?
2. Before you can respect someone's beliefs, what must you know?
(Yes... and how do you find out?)
3. How do we bring Jesus into this conversation? What do these following verses have to say about 'God conversations'?

Luke 21:15

1 Corinthians 3:6

1 Peter 3:15

Five Questions from Paul in Athens

Once you hear and understand someone's beliefs, we can then dive deeper into that relationship with great questions, and we can draw great questions about of Paul's Acts 17 conversation. There is a question we can ask that align with the following verses. Read the verses, and then discuss the questions.

Acts 17:22-24 **1. How's that working out for you? How are your assumptions about God and life working out for you?** What do you think of this question?

Acts 17:25-27 **2. Could there be more in the universe than what we can see and understand right now?** What do you think of this question? Where would you go next?

"Christianity teaches that we aren't alone in a cold, infinite universe. In fact, it isn't just a universe. It is a creation and the creator made it so we could connect with Him, and He isn't far away. We have purpose and meaning beyond reproduction and death. That's good news!"

Acts 17:28 **3. I wonder if the infinite might also be intimate?** How would you say that the God of the bible is intimate, universal and yet personal?

Acts 17:29 **4. Have you found that it's the deeper things like kindness and generosity that give real meaning and happiness? Why is that?** Most don't need convincing, but this question opens up dialogue about values and underlying common truths in life.

Acts 17:30-31 **5. If things aren't working in your life and with your beliefs, would it be worth rethinking your approach to life?** "Rethink your approach to life" is a good definition of the word *repent*. What do you think of this question? Is your faith making every thing work out well in your life? How would you answer, "What does your faith in Jesus do for you?"

Challenge

Every person has wished they could do something differently, become something more, go back and fix something, or be different in the future. You are the one with good news like forgiveness, grace, transformation, and restoration. These beliefs are not in any way obsolete today. People need Jesus as much as ever before, and you, my friends, are the messengers, ambassadors, and lives that share Jesus today. May God bless your conversations with boldness, love and the light of Christ.

