

LIFEPPOINT

People can tell about the one true God.

PAUL TAUGHT IN ATHENS



LEADER BIBLE STUDY

CONTEXT AND COMMENTARY FOR PERSONAL STUDY AND PREPARATION

(For age-appropriate language, use the Bible story on the following pages.)

Paul's arrival in Athens, a city filled with idols (some estimate thirty thousand idols), greatly distressed him. The Greek word used here, *kateidōlos*, means "full of idols," suggesting the city had overwhelmingly turned itself over to idolatry.

Paul chose to begin teaching about Jesus in the Jewish synagogue. He knew the Jews were familiar with the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah and would most easily understand the connection between Jesus and those prophecies. Paul taught that God fulfilled His promises through Jesus.

Then Paul sought out Greeks who believed in the one true God, eager to teach them about Jesus and the resurrection. Paul taught in the marketplaces, the streets, and anywhere he could gather an audience. Some men he conversed with were intrigued, while others dismissed his teaching as foolish.

Paul also sought out some of the leading philosophers of the time, including the Epicureans (*ep ih kyoo REE uhn iz uhms*) and the Stoics (*STOH ihks*). The Epicureans believed that while gods exist, they do not interfere with human life. The Epicureans responded to Paul's teachings with contempt. The Stoics were pantheists who believed that God (or the divine) exists in everything and does not exist as a separate entity. They thought Paul was introducing them to two new gods—Jesus and the resurrection.

These philosophers invited Paul to speak at the Areopagus (*ehr ih AHP uh guhs*), a rocky hill near the Acropolis (*uh KRAHP uh liss*) called Mars Hill. The Areopagus was the center of intellectual and cultural exchange in a city known for its philosophical heritage.

At this site and to these elite thinkers, Paul preached one of the most significant sermons of his lifetime. He opened his message by building a bridge to his listeners. Paul acknowledged that the men of Athens considered themselves to be very religious. He pointed out the many "objects of worship" around the city as evidence of their faith. Paul further emphasized their religiosity by referencing the statue dedicated to an "unknown god," erected lest they inadvertently omit a god.

Paul explained that God is not like the Greek idols. He is the one true God who made everything in the world; human hands dictate nothing about Him. Paul's message at the Areopagus was a call to repentance, urging the Athenians to turn from their idolatry and accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the assurance of God's coming judgment. Paul's sermon at the Areopagus shows us that the gospel is universal, regardless of the culture or background of the hearer. As you pray this week, ask God to give you the opportunity and the courage to follow Paul's model of evangelism. Ask Him to cross your path with people who need to hear the good news of Jesus.

LIFE POINT

People can tell about the one true God.

LEVEL OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Christians are called to tell the people all over the world about Jesus.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Acts 17:16-34

BIBLE VERSE

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek
Romans 1:16

SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

May 24



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

- Kids stand in circle.
- Explain that you will select one person to be the guesser and one to be the leader. Choose someone to be the guesser, who will stand in the middle and close his eyes.
- Point to someone to be the leader. kids to follow the leader. guesser opens his eyes to watch the others. He can call out the leader's name when he thinks he knows who it is.
- If he is correct, Start a new round with new guesser and leader. If he is not correct, continue he can try one more time if he does not get it right again start again.
- After several rounds, lead kids to tell if it was easy to discover who the group was following. Say: "In today's Bible story you will learn how one man followed Jesus and taught others about Him."



TELL THE STORY

1. PRACTICE ROMANS 1:16. USE BIBLES.

- Mention that Christians are called to tell people all over the world about Jesus. Lead kids to locate Romans 1:16 in their Bibles. Invite child volunteers to read the verse aloud. Ask the group to shake their heads no if they should not be ashamed of the gospel (the good news about Jesus) or to nod their heads yes if people are to be ashamed of the gospel (the good news about Jesus). (Kids should shake their heads no.) • Write on the board or call attention to the "Romans 1:16" poster. Direct the group to repeat after you as you say the verse in a bold voice. Suggest kids choose a partner and say the verse to one another.

2. TELL THE BIBLE STORY

- Ask if kids had rather tell good news or hear good news. Mention in the Bible story Paul told the good news or gospel about Jesus. Remark that the people who heard the good news were the men in Athens. Invite kids to listen to discover how the people who heard the good news responded. Open your Bible to Acts 17 and tell the Bible story in your own words.



TELL THE STORY

BIBLE STORY: PAUL TAUGHT IN ATHENS

Paul was concerned about the city of Athens. It was full of idols that the people made. Paul was sad to see people worshiping false gods. Paul went to the synagogue and talked with the Jews about Jesus. Every day in the marketplace Paul would tell the good news about Jesus and the resurrection to anyone who was there. Some philosophers (men who liked to think, reason, and argue) heard Paul teach. They did not know what Paul was talking about. They said, “He seems to be preaching about foreign gods.” Other men wanted to hear more, so they invited Paul to speak at the Areopagus, a place where people came to discuss important ideas.

The men said, “What you say sounds strange to us. We want to know what it means.” Paul spoke respectfully. “People of Athens,” he began, “I see you are a very religious people. I even saw an altar you have for an unknown god. I can tell you about the God who made the world and who is Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in places people make. He does not need anything from us because He is the One who gives life and everything else. He created the people of every nation and wants them to know Him as God. We live and move and exist through Him. We are His, and God is not made of gold or silver or stone, like man makes.”

Paul continued, “God is alive, and He commands all people everywhere to repent and turn away from disobeying Him.” Paul also explained that God sent Jesus. When Paul told how Jesus rose from the dead, some people laughed at Paul. Others wanted to hear more. Because Paul taught the good news of Jesus, some men and women in Athens became followers of Jesus.

—BASED ON ACTS 17:16-34

3. EXPLORE THE LIFE POINT

- Show the teaching picture. Let kids tell what they remember from the Bible story as you point to the people in the picture. When you point to Paul, ask what Paul taught the men in Athens. (God is the one true God.) Ask how the people responded.
- Read John 17:3 aloud from your Bible. Explain that Paul taught that God sent Jesus. He also spoke about the resurrection. Mention that Jesus took the punishment for sin when He died on the cross. Jesus rose again and is the Savior. Point out that when someone becomes a Christian, he should tell others about God and Jesus. • Point out that people can tell about the one true God. Instruct the boys and girls to use their hands as megaphones and announce: “God is the one true God.”

4. PRAY

- Invite kids to think of someone they can tell about Jesus, without saying the person’s name aloud. Lead kids to think their prayers as they ask God to help them tell someone they know that Jesus loves them. Ask the group to pray that people all around the world will know about Jesus.



BIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Station 1

Divide the memory verse into short segments and write each part on a strip of paper, then place one strip inside each balloon before inflating them. Have kids play “keepy uppy,” keeping the balloons off the ground, and when one drops, let them pop it and read the verse segment inside. Everyone repeats that part of the verse together before starting the next round with a new balloon. Continue until all the balloons are popped and the full verse is revealed. Finish by inviting kids to say the entire verse from memory as a group.

Station 2

Provide Play-Doh, magnatiles or legos and invite kids to create something from “the world” like trees, people, or animals. As they build, remind them that God made everything they are creating. Afterward, let them share what they made and say, “God made ____!” Reinforce that God is the Creator of all things.

Station 3

Dig for Letter: Using a Sensory tub and the bible verse in strips of paper. Hide the bible verse in the sensory tub and have kids find the memory verse and put it together in order.

Station 4

Inflate a trash bag so it becomes a puffy “pillow” and place a small, lightweight ball on top. Kids gently tap the bag to launch the ball into a basket, taking turns to try and make it in. Each time a child makes a basket, have them say one true thing about God or name something He made. Explain that Paul knew who God was because he studied Scripture and had an encounter with Jesus. Remind kids that we can know God too by reading His Word and talking to Jesus every day, then show them the DBR and briefly explain how to use it.

Station 5

Using cardstock, glue, glitter, and markers, instruct kids to write “There is one true God” Decorate with stickers and gems. Talk about how Paul confronted people for worshipping shiny idols of gold and silver and stone. Say how Jesus is the one true God.