

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.)

LIFE POINT

People can tell
about the one
true God.

LEVEL OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

God calls all Christians
to tell people about
Jesus and to teach
them how to know and
follow God.

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 (ESV)

SUGGESTED FOR THE WEEK OF

May 24

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 uhns*) 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 life. 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.



TELL THE STORY

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY

Give each preteen an index card and pencil. Ask them what they wish they could spend all their time doing, and lead them to draw a quick sketch of that on the card.

Pair preteens, instructing them to introduce themselves and what they wish they could do all the time.

Create groups of four by combining pairs. Allow time for each preteen to introduce his original partner to his new group members. They can spend a few moments discussing what they put on their index cards.

Read Acts 17:21 and explain: “This group of people spent their time telling and hearing new things. They wanted new information. In today’s story, this group got to hear from Paul. What do you think he told them?”

1. GETTING TO THE POINT

Tell preteens that today’s Bible story mentions idols and the Areopagus.

Ask volunteers to tell what they think those words mean. Define idols. An idol is “something that is worshiped in place of God.” Craftsmen would create objects to be worshiped instead of worshiping God, the Creator of heaven and earth. Define the Areopagus. The Areopagus was a particular hill in Athens, but the term also refers to the council that met there. The Areopagus would have wanted to know about new religious teachings.

2. LOOK IN THE BOOK

Guide preteens to open their Bibles to Acts 17:16-34.

Read Acts 17:16. Paul did not like that people were worshiping idols.

Read Acts 17:17-18. Paul reasoned with the people and preached about Jesus.

Read Acts 17:19-21. Ask preteens what happened in this section.

Read Acts 17:22-25. Paul told them about God and introduced that He made the world. Read Acts 17:26-28. Ask: “What is Paul explaining?” Paul tells them that God wants people to seek and find Him.



TELL THE STORY

Read Acts 17:29-34. The idols people had made and were worshiping were not able to do anything. God is greater and worthy of worship.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What city is Paul in during this passage? (Athens)
- Why did Paul reason in the synagogue? (He saw they were given over to
- idols. He preached about Jesus.)
- Why do you think the Areopagus received Paul without any questions? (They wanted to know what his message meant.)
- What inscription had Paul seen? (TO THE UNKNOWN GOD)
- Paul said that God does not dwell in temples made with _____. (hands)
- What does God command everyone to do? (repent, v. 30)
- Tiebreaker if needed: Who believed Paul's message? (Dionysius, Damaris, and others)



BIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Station 1

Play tag! Select someone to be “It”. Depending on the size of your room, speedwalk or run. When you’re tagged, you’re “it,” you have to go tag someone else. After playing a few rounds, tell preteens that just like how when you got tagged you had to go tag others.

Lesson to learn: When you become a Christian you have to go tell others!

Station 2

Using cardstock, glue, glitter, and markers, instruct preteens 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.

Lesson to learn: Jesus is the one true God.

Station 3

Write on sentence strips using the life point and verses from the Bible story. Kids practice saying truths loudly and confidently into a microphone.

Lesson to learn: Paul spoke confidently about the gospel.

Station 4

Using Play-Doh, build what you think an idol looks like. When you finish your sculpture, smash it as hard as you can!

Lesson to learn: Tell preteens that we don’t worship idols because there is only one true God.

Station 5

Using strips of paper, create fake money. Try to barter and buy different objects around the classroom.

Lesson to Learn: Talk about how Paul started sharing the gospel in a marketplace. Be bold and share the gospel wherever you are.