

People can
tell about
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 God.

LEVEL OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

People tell about God and Jesus.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

Acts 17:16-34

BIBLE VERSE

For we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:20

Paul’s arrival in Athens, a city full of 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 uh 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.



TELL THE STORY

PAUL TAUGHT IN ATHENS

Based on Acts 17:16-34

Paul went to a synagogue (church) and told the people about God. Paul also walked around the city and told people about God. He met people who wanted to know more about Jesus, God's Son. Paul told the people that God made the world and everything in it. Paul said the people should love and obey God. Some people liked what Paul said and wanted to hear more.



BIBLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

ART

Paul teaches that God made everything, Place a smock on each child participating. Spray a small amount of shaving cream on a tray then add a few drops of blue and green paint. Let children pat, squish, and swirl the colors with their hands to make “sky and earth” designs. As they play, repeat “God made the world” and “God made you.”

BLOCKS

Suggest the preschoolers use the blocks to make a church building for the people figures. Move the figures about as the kids build. Mention that Paul stopped at a synagogue (church) in Athens. Say ‘He told the people there about God and Jesus’.

HOMELIVING

Have food items in homeliving center. Invite preschoolers to pretend to have a meal together. Tell each other “God loves you”. We can tell others about God!

NATURE

Gather the preschoolers and show them simple items from creation such as a leaf, a rock, and a flower. Allow each preschooler to gently touch and explore the objects while you slowly and clearly say, “God made this.” Repeat the phrase with each item so they begin to associate the truth with what they see and feel. Then connect the story by adding, “Paul told people about God,” and explain in simple language that Paul wanted everyone to know who made the world.

PUZZLES & MANIPULATIVES

Encourage each preschooler to choose a puzzle, remove the pieces from the tray, and work the puzzle. Guide the preschoolers as they replace the pieces in the correct places. Talk about the Bible story as the preschoolers work. Read aloud the text. Mention that Paul listened to God so he would know which towns to go to and tell people about Jesus.