

# SERMON NOTES

Engaging Culture With The Gospel

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Nexus Church  
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## Acts 17:16-34

### ice breaker

Much like Paul in Athens, share about a time when you felt like you were in the right place at the wrong time, only to later realise God had a purpose for you being there.

### overview

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- We are called to engage with culture, not withdraw from it or attack it
- Within each person is spiritual hunger, searching for something beyond oneself
- Effective evangelism finds common ground before presenting Christ
- The resurrection of Jesus is the power that transforms lives, not our neatly packaged evangelism

### discussion

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- 1** What idols are prevalent in our culture today? What do people put their hope in?
- 2** Why is it tempting to want to destroy other belief systems rather than engage with people?
- 3** Why did Paul focus on Jesus and the resurrection rather than just philosophical arguments? (see Acts 17:18, 31-32)

## go deeper

This exploration of Acts 17:16-34 invites us to reconsider how we engage with our secular culture. We discover Paul in Athens, surrounded by idols and intellectuals, yet he doesn't retreat in judgment or attack with condemnation. Instead, he delves beneath the surface to recognise that behind every idol, every philosophy and every empty ritual, is a spiritual hunger waiting to be satisfied.

Ps Andy's message challenges us to move beyond viewing evangelism as either aggressive street preaching or passive invitation culture, and instead embrace a third way: genuine engagement that builds bridges rather than burns them. It's particularly important to recognise the insatiable consumption culture in which we live; the allure of information, entertainment, or material goods. This reveals in each of us a deeper longing, one that only Christ can fulfil.

C.S. Lewis' concept of *Sehnsucht* - an inexplicable yearning for something beyond this world - reminds us that every human heart is searching for meaning. Our call is to embrace being carriers of the treasure for which people are desperately seeking. Our role is not to forcefully impose our faith, but to reveal Christ through authentic connection and finding common ground, while never compromising the transformative power of the resurrection.

## activation

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As part of sharing the gospel with others, Paul likely shared his Damascus road experience. To practice this ourselves, take turns to:

*Explain the significance of an encounter you've had with the Lord, and the impact of His resurrection power.*

## application

Choose **one** of the following to put into practice this week. Discuss which option you'll select and why.

### Option 1: Engage

- Think of one point of common ground you have with someone in your life who doesn't yet know the Lord (could be a shared interest, concern, or value).
- This week, make a point to engage them through that commonality. Don't force a gospel conversation, but pray for an opportunity and be ready to share when the Spirit opens a door.

### Option 2: Observe

- Spend time in a public space this week. Pray and ask God to help you see the spiritual hunger lying beneath the surface.
- Journal: What did you notice? What did God show you?

## prayer points

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- Boldness to engage with people who hold different beliefs, values and lifestyle practices, sharing the hope of the resurrection.
- Specific people in your life who are searching. Name them and pray for them.
- That our faith would not just be intellectual, but heart-transforming.
- That the Lord would move mightily in Brisbane.

## final thought

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**Remember:** We carry the very thing that people are looking for. We don't need all the answers, we just need to point people to Jesus and share what He's done in our lives.

# MORE RESOURCES

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*Fear and judgment often stop us from sharing the gospel. Encourage group members to share anything that holds them back from sharing their faith. Speak truth and life, moving people from potential feelings of inadequacy or shame around evangelism, to a place of being equipped.*

Prayer/praise report from your group? Anything else you think we should know? [Click here](#) to pass it on to our Pastoral Team so we can address it in our weekly meeting.

## additional questions

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Q1 - Who is someone in your life whom you could invite to an upcoming Easter service, and/or sign up to undertake the Alpha course alongside?

Q2 - Through compassion and establishing common ground, how can we build bridges with people of differing beliefs, without compromising the gospel message?

Q3 - Faith cannot remain merely an intellectual exercise but must move from the head to the heart. What might it look like to allow God to move from intellectual agreement to heart transformation in your own life?

Q4 - C.S. Lewis spoke of a deep longing that suggests we were made for another world. How have you experienced this *Sehnsucht* or yearning in your own spiritual journey, and what has satisfied or failed to satisfy it?

Q5 - Paul was in Athens by chance, yet he saw it as a divine appointment. How might God be positioning you in your current workplace, neighbourhood, or relationships to share the hope of Christ with those who are searching?

Q6 - Paul was willing to step into the marketplace and engage with the cultural elite despite potential rejection. What fears or barriers hold you back from sharing your faith, and how might God be calling you to overcome them?