



The Acts of the Spirit
FLIPPING THE GREEK WORLD
UPSIDE-DOWN

ACTS 17:16-21

“THE PHILOSOPHERS”

AUGUST 25, 2024

SUMMARY

Pastor Joey challenged our sense of “S-entness” this week. As we continue in the Book of Acts, we see that however much it cost Paul to share the Gospel, it was nothing compared to how much it would cost others who were not given the opportunity to respond to the gospel in faith. This mindset helped him to engage in healthy conflict with others, regardless of the personal pain it cost him, to help people see the hope in Jesus. Paul was committed to walking the way of Jesus for the sake of those wandering without Him.

This principle was on full display as Paul engaged the world's intellectual center—Athens. Paul went headfirst into the lion's den of philosophy, logic, and pagan idolatry. Paul knew that these men's deepest desires for meaning found their answer in Jesus and his resurrection. But these Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, eager to learn new and exciting things, were perplexed and offended by Paul's teaching, which led to conflict and Paul on trial...again.

We will discuss Paul's defense of himself more next week, but this week, we focus on his willingness to engage in loving conflict for the sake of the Gospel and the salvation of those around him. Pastor Joey challenged us to investigate our avoidance of conflict and how it impacts our spiritual growth and gospel witness.

DISCUSSION

According to Pastor Joey, our congregation has some conflict about conflict. A recent survey found that some of us are more comfortable than others. The results were right down the middle: 49% of us avoid it like the plague, and 51% eagerly jump into the arena.

- How comfortable are you when it comes to conflict, and why?
- There is no more complex conflict than ideological conflict, specifically those relating to religious and philosophical beliefs. What about these topics make having conflict so difficult?



This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: Please feel empowered to use only the questions that are helpful for the context of your group.



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Extract the Truth

Read the text: Acts 17:16-21

- What Jumps out to you from this story?

Athens was a place crawling with individuals passionate about life. The world's intellectual center was consumed with the pursuit of knowledge, meaning, and self-actualization. People sought those things by creating endless idols and diverse (and often competing) philosophies. They wanted to answer the foundational questions of existence while satisfying their longings. They did not know it, but they were searching for the God of the Bible.

- What about this Greek passion and curiosity made them both ripe for and resistant to acceptance of the Gospel?
- How is Ancient Athens both similar and/or different from our present day?

Pastor Joey said that Paul was not worried about how much it would cost him to share his faith (insult, injury, misunderstanding, and rejection). He was worried about how much it would cost the people if they did not hear the Gospel and turn to Jesus.

- What can we learn from Paul's posture towards religious conflict that we can apply to our lives today?

Experience Transformation

- How is your posture towards conflict affecting your witness for Jesus?
- Which of the following are you most afraid of losing through religious conflict:
 - Status
 - Respect
 - Relationship
 - Approval/Love
 - Safety
 - Other
- Let's explicitly list what it would cost the other person when you do not share the Gospel with them (both now and in eternity)?
- How does it impact you hearing that list?
- Like Paul, we share the good news because we are already safe and loved in Christ and by our church community. It is because we have our needs met that we can risk it all to meet others'.
- What is one small yet brave step you could take this week to engage others with the Gospel? What would help you take that step?

Prayer