



Sermon Text: Acts 17:16-21

Sermon Date: July 22, 2018

In his sermon before the Areopagus, Paul gives us a portrait of an effective evangelist. On Sunday, we examined four attributes we should purposely cultivate as we seek to grow as everyday evangelists.

COURTEOUS

First, Paul was courteous. He began his speech with a genuine compliment—“Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.” While this comment should not be read as an endorsement of their idolatry, it is a courteous introduction. Paul begins by seeing the good in those he is trying to reach. Ed Welch says, “As a general rule, we will not be able to have growing relationships in which we help other people unless we see the good in them, and they know we see good in them.” Since all people are created in the image of God, there will always be ways they reflect their Creator.

CREATIVE

Second, Paul was creative. He lived his daily life on the lookout for gospel illustrations. As he walked through Athens, he discovered an idol devoted to an “unknown god.” He then used that altar as a point of contact to share the gospel. In order to communicate the gospel effectively to the particular audience before him, Paul creatively tailored his approach. With Bible-believers, Paul would focus on the Scriptures. But with pagans, he would explain God’s nature first, appeal to creation, and build a scriptural framework for presenting Christ. Essentially, Paul contextualized so that he could communicate the gospel to different audiences without compromising the gospel itself.

COURAGEOUS

Third, Paul was courageous. He had the courage of conviction to not simply share the gospel as another religious idea, but to proclaim it as Truth. He didn’t cut out the hard parts of the gospel or gloss over the aspects that would have been unpopular—like the resurrection. In the arena of ideas, it takes courage to speak convictionally.

CLEAR

Lastly, Paul was clear. Since his audience is completely removed from a biblical worldview, Paul starts at the beginning of the story of salvation. He outlines the big story of Scripture so that the story of Jesus’s death, resurrection, and return makes sense. While Paul’s sermons varied significantly according to his audience, Tim Keller stresses that there are several aspects of Paul’s gospel presentation that remained the same.

1. **Worldview Challenge:** Paul begins by challenging the worldview of the audience to see that their understanding of God is all wrong.
2. **Personal Challenge:** Paul also challenged his audience to see their fallen condition before God. Every person is trying to save themselves in some way, and all are failing.
3. **Proclamation of Christ:** Lastly, Paul proclaims Christ as the only answer and solution to sin, highlighting the need to repent and believe.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. Of the 4 qualities of an effective evangelist, which do you struggle with the most? How can we specifically pray for you in this area?
3. What does it require to creatively contextualize the gospel message?