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### Evangelism

Acts 17

Becky Pippert aptly observes that "there is one thing Christians and non-Christians have in common. They're both uptight about evangelism!" Even the great apostle Paul, whom we tend to think of as a relentless and fearless evangelist, reminded the Corinthians that he came to them "in weakness and fear, and with much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3). In fact, some members of the church remarked, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing" (2 Cor. 10:10). Yet we have much to learn from the example of Paul as one who in the power of the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction preached the good news of Jesus.

1. What are some of your feelings and struggles as you share the gospel with others?
2. Read Acts 17, observing how Paul's presentation of the gospel differed in each of the three cities he visited. Briefly describe any similarities and differences you notice.
3. If there was a synagogue in a city, Paul's custom was to go there first (Acts 17:2). Why would this have been an effective strategy (Acts 17:1-4)?
4. Where could we go today to find people with religious interests?

As was the case with Paul (Acts 17:5-9), why might such people also be our most vigorous opponents?

5. In Thessalonica and Berea, Paul "reasoned with them from the Scriptures." In Athens he did not. When is it most effective to use the Bible as the basis for our evangelism?

**6.** Considering the hostility Paul faced in Thessalonica and Berea, and the fact that he was alone when he entered the pagan city of Athens (Acts 17:16), how do you think Paul felt as he began to preach the gospel in Athens?

**7.** What drove Paul to preach the gospel despite his weakness (Acts 17:3, 16, 31)?

**8.** In Athens Paul not only preached in the synagogue but also in the marketplace (Acts 17:17). Using your imagination and the information in Acts 17:17-21, describe the people, sights and sounds of the marketplace.

**9.** Why would it be a logical place for Paul to go?

**10.** Where are the gathering places "pagans" go to today?

**11.** Study Paul's presentation of the gospel (Acts 17:22-31). How does he adapt his presentation to the interests and background of his audience?

How might we follow his example today without distorting the essential message of the gospel?

**12.** Compare and contrast the responses to the gospel in Thessalonica, Berea and Athens.

**13.** Bearing in mind that Paul's situations in this passage may differ considerably from your own, what can you learn from him about principles of evangelism?