

*Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the Spread of God's Word*  
**Engaging the Culture Around Us, Part 1**

**Acts 17:15-34**

*Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, Nov. 17, 2019*

**I. You'll Need a Love for Unbelievers that's Filled with Both Courage and Compassion**

Athens was a city known for its history, philosophy, and academics—filled with multiple cultures, ideologies, gods, and religions.

**Acts 17:16** “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him...”

“Provoked” in Greek = “paroxyno” which means to be gripped with strong contradictory feelings.

As Paul walked through the city and saw all that the people were caught up in, he was gripped with both indignation *and* compassion.

You are not where you are today because you are better than others. You're here by the mercy of God who sought you, found you, and delivered you!

We should be gripped with the holiness of God and a hatred of sin – while being equally gripped with compassion for broken and lost sinners.

If we have no indignation over sin, we won't have courage to speak up and stand for truth. If we are not filled with compassion, we will lack in gentleness.

Nine times, the Gospel writers tell us that Jesus was moved with compassion when He looked out at the multitudes.

**Matthew 9:36** “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.”

(See also – Mt. 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; Lk. 7:13; 10:33)

**II. You'll Need to Explain What Sets the God of Christianity Apart from All Other Gods**

Paul comes across an altar created for an unknown god and uses that to start a conversation with those in Athens—and then gives them an overview of the one, true, living God! (v 24-31)

Paul's sermon holds to the biblical balance of the transcendence of God - high and lifted up...and the immanence of God - right here and near to us!

### **A. He's Big Enough to Be Worthy of Your Worship and Trust**

**Acts 17:24** "God who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."

**Acts 17:27-28** "...He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being..."

If you want to have rest and a peace that passes all understanding, then you need to have a God who's big enough to worship and big enough to trust.

*"God is God, and if He is God, He is worthy of my worship and my service, and I will find rest nowhere but in His will. That rest is infinitely, immeasurably, unspeakably beyond my largest notions of what He is up to." – Elisabeth Elliot*

*"If God were small enough to be understood He would not be big enough to be worshipped." – Evelyn Underhill*

Genuine rest comes by submitting to a transcendent and immanent God who is for us and with us in the midst of everything we're going through.

### **B. He Doesn't Need Us to Do Anything for Him**

**Acts 17:25** "Nor is He served by human hands as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."

Depending on what you think about yourself and how to be right with God, this is either the worst news or the best news you could ever hear.

Christianity is distinct from every other religion because the Gospel tells us we are in no position to do anything for God. Our greatest need is for Him to do something for us that we could never do for ourselves.

God sent His Son into this world to live the only perfect life and die the only sufficient death that could ever turn back the wrath of God that we rightly deserve.