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## WARM UP

Can you describe a time that you went somewhere expecting it to be a certain way, but upon your arrival and experience there, it was totally different to how you perceived it would be?

## WORD

Read [Acts 17: 16-34](#)

After a fruitful time amongst the Bereans, persecution from the Jews ensues and Paul is forced to leave on a ship to Athens. Upon arriving there, Paul is burdened at the site of the idols that he sees and he seeks to find ways to communicate about Jesus in an unfamiliar territory.

## NOTES

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## 1 Close Encounters of the First Kind

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<sup>16</sup>Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup>So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup>Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup>And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" <sup>20</sup>For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean."

[Acts 17:16-20](#) (ESV)

Upon arriving in Athens and seeing the idols in Greece, Paul starts by going to the synagogue amongst the devout Jews, as well as going to the marketplace. Paul knew the importance of going towards that which was familiar by starting where the Jews would be: at the Synagogue. Despite this, a stir would start amongst the leading thinkers of the area who began to arise with curiosity towards the "strange things" that Paul was teaching as he taught about Jesus and the resurrection.

- How do you respond when you see something that scares you? Are you one who tends to move away or move towards that something?

## 2 Engaged or Huddled

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<sup>22</sup>So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup>nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. <sup>26</sup>And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup>that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup>for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." <sup>29</sup>Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed

by the art and imagination of man. <sup>30</sup>The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

[Acts 17:22-31](#) (ESV)

Paul faces the curious philosophers head-on by quoting their poets in mining out the truth of the Gospel. He understands that they are not familiar with the Bible, let alone believe in it, therefore he uses some of the truth that can be found in their philosophy to open up an opportunity to preach the Gospel.

- Can you think of ways to share the Gospel with people who may be curious about your faith?
- Do you know anyone who needs to hear the Gospel? Will you take the opportunity to communicate the Gospel to them?
- Have you heard the Gospel? Do you know what the Gospel is? Would you like to hear the Gospel?

### Here is a working definition from Dr Rice Brooks:

*"The gospel is the good news that God became man in Jesus Christ. He lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died — in our place. Three days later, He rose from the dead, proving He is the Son of God and offering the gift of salvation and forgiveness of sins to everyone who repents and believes in Him."*

- How does the Gospel affect and move you?

## PRAYER

- Begin by thanking God for the gift of undeserved love, grace and mercy found in the life and death of Jesus Christ, His Son.
- Take the opportunity to repent (turn away from any known areas of sin) and receive God's forgiveness.
- Pray for the boldness to share your faith in Jesus in unfamiliar circumstances.
- Pray against fear and doubt, and for a boldness to live your life in Christ.
- Name those who need to hear the Gospel. Pray for opportunities for them to hear it either from you or from others around them.