

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Why are you here? Who are the people around you? Is there anything God would do for them through you *now*?

Although the apostle Paul may not have asked himself these questions as he arrived in the city of Athens, his love for God was so great that he was filled with distress and provoked to jealousy as he surveyed the city and the people around him. (v.16) His immediate response was to do what he had always done: to visit the synagogue and the marketplace to converse with people. Eventually he was brought to the Areopagus—the main administrative body and the chief court of Athens—because people were curious about the message he was preaching.

Paul had such a strong sense of his mission from God and the people around him that he was able to switch gears and adapt the gospel to their culture and context. His trip to Athens was unplanned, but he used this last-minute diversion to preach the gospel as he observed the Athenians glorifying every each god, except the Creator of heaven and earth. Filled with deep jealousy for God and His name, Paul couldn't help but act—what they professed not to know, Paul proclaimed. (v.23) What the Greco-Roman poets wrote, Paul paraphrased. (v.28) He took into account their lack of knowledge and understanding to assert three fundamental truths about God, humanity, and divine judgment (v.24-31), preaching to them Christ's resurrection from the dead. (v.31) Not everyone believed, but some did. (v.34)

Paul was moved to act because of his great love for both man and God. He saw the needs of the Athenians and their ignorance of God, so he sought to present the gospel in a way that would reach them. Do you do the same, church? Are you jealous for God's name? Do you have the same love for people that Paul had, that moved him to meet their needs by explaining the gospel in a way they would understand?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Is there anything about the world or the people around you that “provokes your spirit” and moves you to action? What are they, and why might you feel compelled to act? If there isn’t anything special that moves you, why do you think that is?

QUESTION TWO:

What are some of the spaces that you inhabit? (E.g. work, school, family, friends etc.) What does the culture of each space look like? How might you adapt the gospel message to be effective in each one of your settings, arousing people’s interest to hear more about Christ whilst avoiding any compromise of the truth?

QUESTION THREE:

Take some time now to practice contextualizing the gospel message! Have some of your life group members engage in a role-play activity with you as they take the role of your colleagues, family, or friends etc., while you attempt to start a Jesus conversation with them.

Some ways to connect with your audience include finding points of common ground, taking the time to understand the person or people you’re talking with, and finding ways to address their personal needs with the good news and Person of Jesus Christ..