
2026

Leadership
Retreat

*Listening Well
Together*

Acts 17:16-21

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”

²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

**What do you think about
Paul's approach to Athens?**



Recognize God's Process

God's work has already been in progress.

“For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god.”

Acts 17:23

- What has been happening here?
- What is at work right now?
- What are the questions people are seeking answers for?
- What are the hopes and motivation of the people?

**Before you do anything,
OBSERVE!**

Observing

- Innovative Ministry requires attentive listening and careful watching
 - Design Thinking is not about inventing
 - Design Thinking is about creating in RESPONSE to deep observation.



The Need for Observing

Good observations lead to
good questions

Good questions lead to
good experiments

Good experiments keep us
humbly close to the Spirit



Ministry Application:

- Are we observing what we have assessed from the past and projected it to today?
- Are we observing what we think SHOULD be happening, instead of what is ACTUALLY happening?
- Are we trying to steer the direction of the ministry so strongly, that we are beginning to lose sight of the real needs of the community?

Keys to Good Observation

Be curious
without
judgment.

Being attentive
to what is there
NOT what isn't!

Guiding Questions

- How is the state of your soul?
- How is the state of your community?
- How do we respond to what we hear?