Discovering the Power of the Word

Reading & Listening Session
Based on Acts 17



With Sister Paulette Morrison
on May 15, 2022



On May 15, 2022, the Reading & Listening Session explored the profound impact of engaging with the Word of God. This session, titled 'Discover the Power of the Word by Reading the Word of God,' drew inspiration from Acts 17, revealing timeless truths about proclaiming the Gospel, facing opposition, and understanding God's nature.

We will be diving into the story of Paul and Silas in Thessalonica and Athens. Let's see what we can learn!

Proclaim the Truth: Planting Seeds in Thessalonica

Acts 17:1-5 (ESV) recounts Paul and Silas's arrival in Thessalonica, where they went to the synagogue and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.' Some were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the people.

Paul's method was straightforward: **reasoning from the Scriptures**. He didn't just assert; he *explained* and *proved* the necessity of Christ's suffering and resurrection. This approach underscores the importance of grounding our faith in the Word. The result? Some were persuaded, marking the birth of **the church in Thessalonica**.

Power in Eagerness: The Berean Example

Acts 17:10-12 (ESV) describes the Bereans: 'Now the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.'

The Bereans exemplify the power of *eagerness* in receiving the Word. They didn't blindly accept; they diligently examined the Scriptures to verify Paul's teachings. This active engagement with the Word

led to belief. We should emulate the Bereans, cultivating a hunger for God's truth and a willingness to test everything against Scripture.

Opposition: A Constant Reality

Acts 17:5, 9 (ESV) highlights the *opposition* Paul and Silas faced: 'But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason... And when Jason and the others had provided sufficient security, they let them go.'

Their message of truth stirred up opposition. Jealousy and resentment fueled the mob's actions. This reminds us that proclaiming the Gospel is often met with resistance. Believers must be prepared to face opposition with courage and wisdom, relying on God's strength and guidance.

Confronting Idolatry: Paul in Athens

Acts 17:16, 18-19, 22 (ESV) shifts the scene to Athens: '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... 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... And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”... So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.'

In Athens, Paul's spirit was provoked by the city's idolatry. Rather than retreating, he engaged with the philosophers, seizing the opportunity to proclaim the true God. His approach was *respectful* yet *bold*, acknowledging their religious inclinations while challenging their idolatrous practices. This illustrates the importance of discerning cultural contexts and adapting our message accordingly.

God Needs Nothing From Us: The Sovereign Creator

Acts 17:24-25 (ESV) presents Paul's profound statement about God: 'The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.'

This verse confronts the notion that God needs anything from us. He is the *self-sufficient* Creator, the source of all life and breath. Our service to Him is not to fulfill a need but to express our gratitude and love for His boundless grace.

The Age of Ignorance Is Over: Revelation Through Christ

Acts 17:30-31 (ESV) declares: 'The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 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.'

Paul announces a turning point in history. The age of ignorance is over. God now commands repentance and offers salvation through Jesus Christ. This message carries a sense of *urgency* and *universality*. Everyone, everywhere, is called to respond to God's grace.

God Is Not Far From Us: Immanence and Relationship

Acts 17:27-29 (ESV) conveys God's nearness: '...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, 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.” 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.'

Paul emphasizes God's *immanence*. He is not a distant, detached deity but is intimately involved in our lives. This closeness invites us to seek Him and find Him. It also challenges us to abandon our human-made idols and embrace the true God who is near.

Acts 17:32-33 (ESV) reveals the mixed response: 'Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” So Paul went out from among them.'

The conclusion of Paul's sermon illustrates the diverse reactions to the Gospel. Some *mocked*, some *procrastinated*, and others *believed*. This reminds us that the message of Christ will always be met with a range of responses. Our role is to faithfully proclaim the truth and trust God to work in the hearts of those who hear.

Key Takeaways

The May 15, 2022 Reading & Listening Session illuminated several key principles from Acts 17

- **Ground your faith in the Scriptures.**
- **Cultivate eagerness in receiving the Word.**
- **Be prepared to face opposition with courage.**
- **Recognize that God needs nothing from us.**
- **Embrace the call to repentance and faith.**
- **Seek God, knowing He is near.**