



## Cultures in Conflict Session 1 Ray Vander Laan

### WHY LEARNING COMMUNITIES?

To become better and better disciples of Christ TOGETHER so we can face **anything** through...

1. Deeper learning of Biblical truth
2. Stronger “iron sharpening iron” relationships

**Ephesians 4:11–16 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup>And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup>so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

**Remember... it's all about putting God's truth into action in everyday lives**

### SESSION 1, “Engaging the Mind: Paul in the Stoa of Athens”

**1 Peter 2:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup>Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

#### ➤ Review and Reminders

The Bible is God's great story of reclaiming a broken world, often intersects with other great cultures.

➔ Slaves in Egypt freed by God, led to Mt. Sinai, there He commissioned them with a mission: to be a Kingdom of Priests, a community of people to put Him on display. Through His Presence among them they could live holy lives so that by what they said and how they lived others would see **Who** God is and **what** God does.

➔ Then Jesus came to complete the task; called and trained a group of disciples, giving them the same mission Israel always had: to be God's witnesses; to let their light shine; hallow God's name.

➔ Then Jesus sent them out to the greater world to show in words and actions **Who** God is and **what** He had done in His Son Jesus.

➔ One was Apostle Paul who headed out to Greco Roman world to give them the word that a new King has come; to mold and shape new communities of priests who would put God on display. Some unlikely people believed that story and other people who resisted it because they had another king.

➔ We will be challenged to become part of the story as study Paul proclaiming Jesus as Lord, Savior and King in the cities of Athens and Corinth

#### ➤ Temples in the Ancient World – meeting point of human and divine

Garden of Eden with all of creation to be a temple

Rebellion led to separation

In desert: Tabernacle as God's dwelling place – God's answer to pagan temples.

Solomon's Temple ... destroyed... rebuilt... renovated

God's ultimate Temple: people

Clash of God and pagan gods

### ➤ **What Paul observes about Athens**

Great architecture honoring empires and pagan religions

Paul troubled by sinfulness and because attributing to false gods what belonged to God alone

But present were a small group of “God fearing Greeks”

### ➤ **Paul presents a radical message in the Stoa**

Paul starts teaching about Jesus in synagogue, moves to the Agora, catches attention of philosophers who wanted to hear more.

### ➤ **Paul receives an invitation**

Amazing that Paul would be invited to speak to learned people in Areopagus, Mars Hill, like the Supreme Court – the highest level

A God created opportunity for “unreachable”, important people to hear about Jesus

**Epicureanism** - seeking pleasure through simple life, comfort, avoiding pain - absence of pain as the greatest pleasure

**Stoicism** - virtue; life spent on the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, justice and temperance - some of these have been brought into Christianity

### ➤ **The Parthenon**

✓ The dominant influence over Athens

✓ A truly magnificent structure

✓ A shrine to the myths of Hellenism

Myth that human mind can determine ultimate truth, solve world’s problems

Bible: we must be transformed by renewing of our minds

✓ A temple to Athena, the goddess of wisdom

We understand what that temple represented to grasp what philosophers taught and why Paul spoke as he did

✓ Intimidation factor

**1 Peter 2:4–5 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup>As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup>you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 3:16 (ESV)** Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

## **TAKEAWAYS**



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