



Cultures in Conflict Session 2 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 4:13–16 (ESV) ¹³until 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, ¹⁴so 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. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from 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

Sense: God is equipping and readying us for “MISSION.”

Review Session 1

Acts 17:16–21

- ✓ Paul enters Athens – filled with pagan temples, man's great architecture, Paul troubled by sinfulness and attributing to other gods what belongs to God alone. Contrast and clash between God's temple and pagan temples. Since Jesus clash is between God's people as God's Temple and rebellious elohim (ala Heiser)
- ✓ Paul starts by teaching about Jesus in synagogue, moves to the Agora, catches attention of philosophers who wanted to hear more.
- ✓ Paul invited to speak in Areopagus, Mars Hill, like the Supreme Court – the highest level
- ✓ A God created opportunity for “unreachable”, important people to hear about Jesus
- ✓ The Parthenon – dominant influence, magnificent structure, shrine to Hellenism and temple to Athena, the goddess of wisdom
- ✓ The intimidation factor for Paul
- ✓ Takeaways on flip chart

Acts 17:22–34

SESSION 2, “Engaging the Heart: Paul Before the Areopagus”

1 Peter 2:12 (ESV) ¹²Keep 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.

➔ **Ancient temples built to bring the divine near**

→ Paul connects with his audience through their worldview

- ✓ Introduces his God using their terminology
- ✓ Explains his God through their ideas
- ✓ Presents the big, new idea – resurrection of Jesus

APPLICATIONS:

- What does it look like to meet people where they are?
- What are intimidation factors for us (Paul being in the Supreme Court!)
- PH Insight: our offensive weapon is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” (Ephesians 6:17b), which is about Spirit empowered **living** and **speaking** the truth in love so that the lost are found and followers of Christ grow.
- Who are the people God is telling you to reach to as salt and light?

→ Paul connects with his audience using the Text:

Easy to miss where Paul’s worldview was coming from...

Acts 17:24 and following

- ✓ Allusions to ideas and quotes from the Text
Paul refers, **alludes** to

Deuteronomy 4

Isaiah 42

2 Chronicles 6 - same passage Stephen referred to

Genesis 10 and 11

Deuteronomy 32

Deuteronomy 4

- ✓ The Text achieves its purpose

Paul came to debate with scholars, brilliantly framed his message in the cultural ideas and metaphors they understood but his message is Hebrew Bible.

God is looking for people who engage the culture they live in as men and women of the text. Never present what you believe outside the language of the text – quotations, allusions, ideas.

Isaiah 55:10–11 (ESV) ¹⁰“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

➔ **You are God’s Parthenon!**

In our Hellenistic culture, we must engage the culture as people who know the culture well, developing relationships and connecting with the truth of the Biblical text.

God’s way is always to put His temple on display – YOU! Live big. Live public. Not shouting, instead learn the culture of people and relate to them accordingly but never forget the truth always comes from the Bible, as we are shaped by the Messiah Himself. You are God’s Parthenon in your community with the mission as a city on a hill – not simply to engage in rational debate but to show them by demonstration.

Temples made with hands are slowly decaying, but WE, as God’s temple, are going the other way – slowly being finished. Seek the Lord, Paul says. There are those who grope blindly.

YOU as the Temple can bring His Presence to the groping – make Him near and people will find Him.

APPLICATIONS:

- Are you surprised no church was established in Athens? Why or why not?
- What might Paul’s time in Athens have been about?
- How are we to respond when expectations are not met?

TAKEAWAYS



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