



# Small Group Study Guide for May 14, 2023

*Our Savior Lutheran Church and School*

**Theme: Be Prepared to Give an Answer.** As Paul witnessed to the people of Athens, he shared with them the Good News of Jesus in terms they could understand. We should be prepared to give a reason for the hope that we have in a thoughtful, winsome way, to let the Spirit do His work in people's hearts.

## **Getting Started: (sharing with each other)**

1. Think of a book, an event, a sermon, or a resource that really helped you understand the Christian faith or a certain aspect of it better. Share that with your group.
2. Did you have a faith-filled mother or grandmother who shared Jesus with you? If not, were there any mother-like figures in your life that were a Christian example and encouragement?

## **In the Word: Read Acts 17:16-33**

3. Where are the two main locations for Paul's witnessing? (verse 17) How do you think Paul's arguments and 'reasoning' were different in those two places?
4. Paul gained the attention of some of the philosophers in the area, who wanted to hear more. Notice that Paul was preaching "the Good News/Gospel about Jesus and the resurrection." (verse 18). Discuss a little about the content of Paul's preaching. What exactly might Paul have been saying about "the Good News about Jesus" and what might Paul have said about "the resurrection"?
5. Paul gets invited to a meeting of the Mars Hill Society (Areopagus) where locals gathered to discuss and debate different ideas. Do we have similar settings today? Where do people meet and gather (outside the church) to discuss and talk about the latest ideas? Disclaimer: Our polarized society has made it so difficult for people to have civil discussions and to respectfully disagree! Do people have anywhere they can engage in healthy debate and deep discussions? Do you?
6. What Scripture passages does Paul reference in his speech to the Areopagus, and what do you think that can teach us when we give witnesses 'out in the world'?

7. Paul references important landmarks in Athens (the temples and altar to an unknown god) and also quotes the Greek poets as a way to connect to the Gospel. Give some thought to landmarks in our area (Lansing area or anywhere in Michigan) and to modern day poets (song lyrics and TV/movies) and how Christians might point to some of them as a connection or spring board for sharing the Gospel. How do these landmarks, songs, and movies, connect in any way to our faith?

**Landmarks** – (places of importance to our society, in the Lansing area or anywhere in Michigan)

**Songs & Movies** – (modern day poets, whose words capture the mood and feelings of the generation, the humor and the hopes of our day)

8. Paul brings the listeners in, and then shares with them the message of Jesus. The most controversial part (and the most critical!) is in verse 30-31. Notice that Paul's preaching (*Repent!* Acts 17:30) and Peter's preaching at Pentecost (*Repent!* Acts 2:38) is the same as Jesus' message (*Repent! For the Kingdom of heaven is at hand* Matthew 4:17, etc.). Look closely at the two kinds of responses from the listeners to Paul's message in verses 32-34. What might that say about Christian preaching today?

**Putting it all Together (what do we believe or do as disciples?)**

9. Jesus sent His disciples to be His witnesses "in Jerusalem and Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8). What are ways that you see our church and school giving a witness to Jesus and sharing Christ with people to the ends of the earth?
10. Do you know personally anyone who is anti-Christian, an atheist, or even hostile to Christianity? How do we love and witness to such people?
11. What aspects of the Christian faith do you feel you need more resources to be better equipped, so that you can "be prepared to anyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have" with gentleness and respect? (feel free to have someone in your group email your ideas to Pastor Wangelin)

**Prayer:** Thank God for the people who shared Jesus with you. Pray for the people that you mentioned and others in your life who don't yet know the grace and truth we have in Jesus. Ask for the Holy Spirit to help us individually and as a church family to share Christ with all people, to fulfill the Great Commission.

**Next Week:** We celebrate Jesus' ascension to heaven and His promise to be with us always.