

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Love Your Neighbor

This teaching from Jesus is one of the most direct we see in scripture: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love God and love your neighbor. It is hard to have one without the other. This is the call and our task at hand.

Message Description:

We find Paul in Acts 16 hanging out in Athens, the intellectual epicenter of the Mediterranean world. It was a time of new cults and divinities and ways of thinking, and most of them lived together peaceably. Culturally speaking, Paul is pretty far from rural Palestine, and this episode shows us what happens when the gospel encounters different cultures.

As Paul engages with the city and its council leaders, he gives us a framework for how to love our neighbors by respecting them. Especially our neighbors who come from different backgrounds, cultures, languages, beliefs, and even religions. Paul first spends time in the city, noticing what is important to them. Then he establishes common ground by quoting their Greek poets. And then he speaks the truth about the resurrection. **He preaches the gospel without yelling, name calling, or offending these leaders and officials in their different way of thinking, but by meeting them where they are, engaging with them in a way they can understand, and many come to believe!**

It is the Spirit who has provoked Paul. It is the Spirit who inspired Paul. It is the Spirit who gives Paul the words to speak. Therefore, it is only the Spirit who prompts some in the crowd to respond. It is not our job to convert anyone. It is not our job to loudly proclaim what we think is true or to force our own way on others based on our religious or political convictions. **It is our job to love and to tell the story.**

Key Scripture: Acts 17:16-34

Questions based on this week's teaching:

1. Have you ever found yourself in a city or place where you were the minority (either culturally, racially, or religiously)? How did you feel? How did you engage with those around you?
2. What did you think about Paul's approach of establishing common ground by quoting Greek poets? What common ground do you think we have with other cultures or world religions? How can that be a starting point for respectful dialogue?
3. At the end of her teaching, Rachel shared some reasons why people avoid engaging with religious communities today. What would you add to the list?
4. Talk about other tangible ways we can KNOW, PRAY for, and RESPECT our neighbors. Share them with Rachel!