



Reaching Intellectuals for Christ

By Shannon Ford January 24, 2024

TODAY'S READING: Acts 17

If the thought of sharing the gospel with intellectuals intimidates you, then Paul's sermon to the philosophers of Athens should both encourage and instruct you. He was in Athens, not by his plans, but because he had to flee persecution in Berea. He was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him. As he strolled around the city, his spirit was provoked by the abundance of idols he saw. One early observer said that you were more likely to meet a god in Athens than a man, and it was statistically true. It is estimated that there were about 30,000 idols in the city, but only 10,000 people when Paul visited there.

The glory days of Athens had been four centuries earlier, but it was still one of the top intellectual and cultural centers of the world. As Paul began to talk to the intellectuals and philosophers, he finds common ground by stating that they were religious (v. 22). Then Paul points them to the supremacy of God as the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth. He shows God's sovereignty over men and nations, and man's utter dependence on God for life, breath, and all things. He shows how foolish idolatry is. God made us; we cannot make God! He concludes by calling them to repentance before the God who judges the world through Jesus Christ whom He raised from the dead.

Do not feel intimidated to talk to an intellectual about Jesus Christ, because you know something he/she does not. You know God and they are ignorant of God. The word "agnostic" means that he/she does not know if there is a God. Tell them what you know! I have discovered that intellectuals have a lot of questions, but they do not have any good answers! They are like the men Paul warned Timothy about, who are "always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). If you know God

through Jesus Christ, you have something that the philosophers lack. Share what He has done in your life.

The only way an intellectual can be saved is the only way anyone can be saved, by repenting of his/her pride and other sins, and by trusting in Jesus Christ as the one who bore his penalty for their sin on the cross and was resurrected to defeat death and hell. Many intellectuals concern themselves with lofty questions, but never face their own sin and need for a Savior. If we follow Paul's example of showing them the supremacy of God and their own sinfulness and calling them to repentance and faith in the risen Lord Jesus, it will cause some to sneer and put us off until later. But some will believe and be saved.

PRAYER: Father, all people need Jesus. Remind us that the ground at the cross is level, welcoming all people. Lord, give us opportunities to share the gospel to the lost regardless of their backgrounds or educational level. Amen.

TOMORROW'S READING: Acts 26

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