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One of the greatest examples of love, compassion, and commitment in reaching others with the gospel of the grace of God is the Apostle Paul. His adventures recorded in the Book of Acts are set as a beautiful testimony of what it means to be a true follower of the way, the Lord Jesus Christ, changing others' lives by opening their eyes to the truth.

While he was in Berea with Timothy and Silas, the brethren sent Paul on to Athens alone. As he spent some time there, not having his traveling companions with him, two notable truths about Paul's ways in Christ are revealed: (1) he was very compassionate in loving people, regardless of how they were living their lives at the time; and (2) he was adept at speaking in terms of people's understanding and weaving the truth into his presentations, regardless of cultural and intellectual differences. Paul's time in the city of Athens illustrates these very important practices in reaching the hungry-hearted.

Acts 17:16,17:

Now while Paul waited for them [Timothy and Silas] at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed [reasoned] he in the synagogue with the Jews [Judeans], and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

Paul saw great need in Athens. The Athenian culture promoted the worship of other gods and idols. He was stirred, spiritually energized, to lovingly and courageously hold forth the Word of God to help any who would listen, despite how they were living. He clearly understood they were ignorant of the knowledge of truth he had. So he was willing to impart it and give them the opportunity to believe. He walked as Christ walked and had compassion for the people of that city.

When Paul preached the Word in Athens, certain people, philosophers, brought him to a place called Mars' Hill (Acts 17:18,19,22). It was here that Paul walked in the wisdom of

God and used the Athenians' own culture, education, and understanding of life to illustrate the truth of God's Word.

Acts 17:23,28:

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

For in him [God] we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Paul masterfully used both a physical altar and a section from a poem by a Greek poet that the Athenians would have been knowledgeable of to teach them about the true God. He used these things to help them understand and therefore be persuaded of the truth. In his presentations, Paul's goal was to eventually get to the truth regarding the Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

Acts 17:31:

...whereof he [God] hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him [Jesus Christ] from the dead.

These are tremendous lessons for us. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can have compassion on people despite their current way of living. Many don't know any better because they have no knowledge of the truth. Let's give them an opportunity to believe.

Like Paul, we can effectively share the Word by using the things people already understand from their own culture, background, and education to bring them to the truth. Look at the results of Paul's actions.

Acts 17:34:

Howbeit certain men clave unto him [Paul], and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

The example of Paul in Athens is set brilliantly for us to glean from and act upon. As we faithfully apply his ways in Christ, let's expect to win others also back to God!

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