

# Acts: Paul at Athens

## [Acts 17:16-34](#)

In Athens, Paul preaches the gospel to a group of people from a radically different context. Yet even apart from the backdrop of Judaism, the gospel is powerful to pierce hearts and reveal the emptiness of idolatry. Our culture is likewise full of idols, and we must grow in awareness of the idols in our own lives and speak the gospel to others with compassion.

## Application

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1. We all worship something—family, athletics, control, comfort, peace, status, etc. How can you grow in awareness of your idols? Consider specifically how you allocate your time and money.
2. It is also true that idols leave us empty. They do not deliver what they promise. How can the idolatry of our culture create opportunities for us? In what ways can you help others recognize the emptiness of their idolatry?
3. Like Paul, we should be filled with compassion and share the gospel with those around us. Who in your life needs to hear the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection? How can you move towards having that conversation with them?

## Key Points

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- Anything we build our lives around—even good things—can be an idol. We are all natural worshipers who orient our lives around what we believe will feed our souls.
- When Paul sees the idolatry of the Athenians, he is moved with compassion. He knows that idols are imposters which leave us empty and heartbroken.
- We often fail to see others with compassion, either because we are not troubled by their idolatry, or because we see their way of life as a threat.
- While the gospel offers hope, it can be difficult to receive. People must see their sin, understand their need of God, and be willing to turn from what they are already worshiping.
- What you believe about God has no bearing on who God is. He does not need our belief in order to exist.
- While building relationships with people is good, the most important thing is to share the gospel. We must be clear that God does not offer a better life, but he does offer eternal life.

## Other Scripture References

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[Isaiah 53](#)

[Psalm 2](#)

[Psalm 22](#)

[Psalm 110](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:3b-4](#)