

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Momentum: The Gospel
"Momentum" Series
September 23/24, 2017

Main Idea

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16-17).

Discovery Questions

1. Over the past couple of weeks we've talked about intentionally developing relationships with others in order to reach them for the sake of Christ. Take a few moments to share with the group: What steps have you taken? How did it go? What obstacles did you encounter? How did you leave things – what's next?

This week, as we continue our "Momentum" series, we're taking a look at the early church's commitment to the gospel message—the message of Jesus—and their focus on getting it out to as many people as possible, in the most compelling way possible.

For this week's study, we'll look at a very famous sermon in the book of Acts where Paul wants to reach people with no background in Judaism or Christianity, and the way in which he tailored his message of Jesus for an audience who would be totally unfamiliar with it. From his example, we're going to learn how to reach those around us with the message of Jesus.

2. Read Acts 17:16-34. What are some of the different ways Paul uses to start a spiritual conversation with the people in Athens? List all that stand out to you.

3. a. How open do you think the community where you live/work/play is to spiritual conversations? What makes you answer the way you do? Looking at Acts 17:22, where have you seen evidence of spiritual interest in the people around you?
- b. Are there any effective or positive ways of reaching others for Christ that you have seen other people use? Share those with the group. What stands out to you about those methods?

4. Part of what Paul does in Acts 17 is what we would call starting "a spiritual conversation" with the people of Athens, engaging them where they are by using things they know in order to share Christ.
- a. As you think about those you interact with on a regular basis who don't know Jesus, how might you start a "spiritual conversation" with them? Brainstorm with your group some ways you could create a friendly opportunity for someone to talk about their faith background and allow you to talk about yours.
- b. What could get in the way of creating this opportunity with someone you know this week? How could you overcome that?

5. Paul knew a lot about the Athenians, which allowed him to with engage them about their interests. This week, what could you do to get to know a person in your life better who doesn't know Jesus?

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Consider breaking into pairs and talk with one other person about someone God is laying on your heart to reach with the message of Jesus. Discuss what steps you will take this week to get to know them better. Close by praying for those people.

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DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Leader Guide

1. Over the past couple of weeks we've talked about intentionally developing relationships with others in order to reach them for the sake of Christ. Take a few moments to share with the group: What steps have you taken? How did it go? What obstacles did you encounter? How did you leave things – what's next?

This is a "lighter" question designed to get the conversation going. Spend about 5-7 minutes on this question.

This week, as we continue our "Momentum" series, we're taking a look at the early church's commitment to the gospel message—the message of Jesus—and their focus on getting it out to as many people as possible, in the most compelling way possible.

For this week's study, we'll look at a very famous sermon in the book of Acts where Paul wants to reach people with no background in Judaism or Christianity, and the way in which he tailored his message of Jesus for an audience who would be totally unfamiliar with it. From his example, we're going to learn how to reach those around us with the message of Jesus.

2. Read Acts 17:16-34. What are some of the different ways Paul uses to start a spiritual conversation with the people in Athens? List all that stand out to you.

Athens was a center of philosophical thought in that day; as Luke states, "All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas" (Acts 17:21). Athens was also a religious city; there were statues of gods all over the place. Paul was given the mission to preach the gospel there, but he faced a challenge: how to talk about Jesus to a group of people who have no knowledge of the true God, and no history in the Old Testament Scriptures? Paul knew that his normal method for evangelizing was not going to work.

What we see Paul do in this passage is "translate" the gospel message in order to reach these people. In a sense, he tried to start a "spiritual" conversation with them. This is how we see Paul go about it:

- *First of all, he found something that connected with them – they had a statue addressed to an "Unknown God"; Paul told them he was going to talk about this "unknown God" (Acts 17:23).*
- *Second, he engaged them with the "big picture," (the creation of the world – Acts 17:24) rather than focus immediately on personal sin. He did talk about sin (Acts 17:30-31), but he first led with something that would interest them – "I am going to tell you about the God who created this world..."*
- *Third, he quotes their poets. Paul knew enough about these people, and cared enough about them to work in a quote from one of their own poets (Acts 17:28).*
- *Fourth, Paul did not back down from proclaiming the gospel and Jesus Christ (Acts 17:29-31) – there is no message without Jesus, and Paul made sure to include Jesus in what he said.*
- *Finally, Paul did it all out of love (Acts 17:16) – Paul did not try and reach these Athenians because he wanted another notch on his belt; Paul was distressed because they didn't know the truth, and he wanted to give them the truth.*

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Spend 7-10 minutes on this question.

3.
 - a. **How open do you think the community where you live/work/play is to spiritual conversations? What makes you answer the way you do? Looking at Acts 17:22, where have you seen evidence of spiritual interest in the people around you?**
 - b. **Are there any effective or positive ways of reaching others for Christ that you have seen other people use? Share those with the group. What stands out to you about those methods?**

For part “a,” many people these days claim to be “spiritual” and many have some background in church / or religion that holds some degree of “nostalgia” for them, even if they no longer practice that faith. Most people can recall a religiously devoted grandmother or grandfather they remember fondly. Engaging people on that level can often be a very effective way into talking about Jesus.

Spend 5-7 minutes on this question in its entirety.

4. **Part of what Paul does in Acts 17 is what we would call starting “a spiritual conversation” with the people of Athens, engaging them where they are by using things they know in order to share Christ.**
 - a. **As you think about those you interact with on a regular basis who don’t know Jesus, how might you start a “spiritual conversation” with them? Brainstorm with your group some ways you could create a friendly opportunity for someone to talk about their faith background and allow you to talk about yours.**
 - b. **What could get in the way of creating this opportunity with someone you know this week? How could you overcome that?**

For part “a,” you may want to ask the group if there’s anything they’ve done in the past that has worked in this regard. Examples include asking people if they grew up going to church; if they celebrate any of the holidays throughout the year; if they have any memories of religious grandparents; if they ever have been to church, etc. – any of these are great starters for spiritual conversations.

For part “b,” fear, time, lack of interaction with unbelievers—all of these can get in the way of creating opportunities to reach others. Sometimes the best way to overcome that is to simply push through the fear and just try it; the more you do it, the easier it becomes!

Spend about 10-12 minutes on this question in its entirety.

5. **Paul knew a lot about the Athenians, which allowed him to with engage them about their interests. This week, what could you do to get to know a person in your life better who doesn’t know Jesus? Consider breaking into pairs and talk with one other person about someone God is laying on your heart to reach with the message of Jesus. Discuss what steps you will take this week to get to know them better. Close by praying for those people.**

Spend 5-7 minutes on this question.