

Values: Our Common Heartbeat
Proclaiming Graciously
Acts 17:16-34

Getting Started

Proclaiming Graciously - In a world of arrogance and hypocrisy, we declare the absolute truth of God's Word and its message of gospel grace with boldness and kindness.

- ❖ What resonates the most with you in this week's value statement?
- ❖ Brainstorm some examples of "ungracious proclamation".
- ❖ Share some examples you have experienced of "gracious proclamation".

Digging Deeper

- ❖ **Read 1 Cor. 9:19-23**
 - How would you describe Paul's philosophy when engaging unbelievers?
 - Think back to the ministry of Jesus. Give some examples of where Jesus' approach to people was similar to Paul's.
 - What do you think the biggest obstacle is to us as Christians in adopting this mind-set?
- ❖ **Read Acts 17:16-34**
 - How do you see Paul's philosophy that he describes in 1 Cor. 9, being exhibited in this incident in Athens?
 - The Epicureans and the Stoics were very different philosophically. Read the following by John Stott and discuss how Paul's message addressed these disparate philosophies.

Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him, and he with them. These were contemporary but rival systems. The Epicureans, or 'philosophers of the garden', founded by Epicurus (died 270 BC), considered the gods to be so remote as to take no interest in, and have no influence on, human affairs. The world was due to chance, a random concourse of atoms, and there would be no survival of death, and no judgment. So human beings should pursue pleasure, especially the serene enjoyment of a life detached from pain, passion and fear. The Stoics, however, or 'philosophers of the porch' (the *stoa* or painted colonnade next to the *agora* where they taught), founded by Zeno (died 265 BC), acknowledged the supreme god but in a pantheistic way, confusing him with the 'world soul'. The world was determined by fate, and human beings must pursue their duty, resigning themselves to live in harmony with nature and reason, however painful this might be, and develop their own self-sufficiency. To oversimplify, it was characteristic of Epicureans to emphasize chance, escape and the enjoyment of pleasure, and of the Stoics to emphasize fatalism, submission and the endurance of pain. (John Stott)

Think About It

Our urgent need today is to reunite evangelism and apologetics, to make sure that our best arguments are directed toward winning people and not just winning arguments, and to seek to do all this in a manner that is true to the gospel itself. (Os Guinness, Fools Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion)