

VOYAGER

Experiences That Shape Our Faith

About the Series: Experiences are powerful and can shape our Christian faith. But experiences should not be what defines our faith. Rather, it should serve to strengthen our faith and affirm what we already know to be the facts of our faith as recorded in the Scriptures. In this sermon series, we explore the journeys of Apostle Paul and how encountering life-changing experiences can teach valuable life lessons to voyagers like us who are on a journey called life.

Part 9

Engaging the Culture

Acts 17:16-34 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

DISCUSS

Culture can be defined as the ways of thinking, living, and behaving that define a group of people. Regardless of ethnicity, age, wealth, or social status, followers of Jesus should be defined by the Christian culture—one that is Christ-centered and understands the importance of engaging those from different cultures. The apostle Paul's encounter with Athenian culture is a great guide for the manner in which we relate and interact with the culture in which we live. Read Acts:16-34.

Our RESPONSE to ungodly culture: BE DISTURBED (v. 16)

- Why was Paul disturbed instead of being in wonderment upon seeing the impressive ancient buildings of Athens?
- How do you react when you visit countries where temples and shrines of idols are so prevalent? Does it bother you? Are you not affected that so many people live in spiritual darkness and are eternally lost? Why?

- Aside from man-made idols or icons, what other idolatrous practices of this culture do people practice and live by that contradict what is taught in the Bible?
- How do you react to inappropriate things that the Christian mind should not see, absorb and be entertained? What is the danger of being desensitized to these kinds of worldly culture?
- How should you respond to ungodly culture?

Our RESPONSIBILITY to culture: ENGAGE TO TRANSFORM (v. 17-18)

- How did Paul engage the culture for Christ's sake?
- How about you? Are you afraid to start a conversation about spiritual things because you know deep down that Christian culture will differ from the world's culture, and you don't want to let it be known that you are different?
- As a Christian you have the responsibility to engage the culture if it is against what the Scriptures tell you. How would you do it in your place of work, in school (if you are a student) or in your family setting so that you can transform it according to God's Word?

Our EXPECTATION when engaging culture: REJECTION (v. 18)

- How did the Greek philosophers react to Paul?
- Would you be willing to stand up for Christ and His Word even if some people would reject you?
- If people you know call you names or talk behind your back or even if they begin NOT to invite you to certain things, will you still take a stand? How willing are you to face rejection?

Our PREPARATION when engaging culture

1. UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE (v. 19-31)

- How did Paul differentiate the One True God from the false gods of the Greeks (v. 24-31)? Did his speech show that he knew the culture well?
- How do you share with others that your God is loving and caring for His people? Have you ever shared that Your God does not live in temples or buildings, but is accessible to all people?
- How much of the culture do you know about the person you want to reach for Christ? How much do you understand about the Christian culture so that, just like the apostle Paul, you can

share a message of hope and purpose and a message of salvation for the person who needs to hear?

2. KNOW THE BIBLE (v. 24-31)

Paul certainly knew the Scriptures well. He understood biblical theology. He knew the points to make, and the points of disagreement between the Christian culture and the Athenian culture.

- As Christ's follower, how much do you know about the Scriptures so that you can speak your arguments clearly and with passion and conviction?
- Do you know what you believe and WHY you believe what you believe? Are you able to defend your Christian faith in this culture?

Our PRAYER when engaging culture: PEOPLE WILL KNOW JESUS (v. 32-34)

- What were the three reactions that Paul experienced in Athens?
- How should you feel if a person you are sharing the gospel with rejects God and His Word? How about with those who show interest to discover more about the Christian faith?
- Have you ever shared the gospel and that person you were sharing with accepted Jesus as his or her Savior? How did you feel about it?
- Who are the people you are praying for to know Christ?

REFLECT

As you engage the culture, how do your words and actions encourage men and women to know Christ as their Personal Savior and submit to His Lordship in their lives?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for opening my mind that world culture is something that I need to engage with as Your child. It is not easy, but through the Holy Spirit, I know that I can do it. Lord, give me the wisdom and discernment I need in how I should engage the culture in order to transform it for Jesus Christ. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.