

# (Acts) Seeking Common Ground

by Brian Brodersen

---

*Paul's sermon on Mars Hill emphasizes the call to repentance and the revelation of God's existence and character, as the creator and independent God who is not dependent on human sacrifices or worship.*

**Duration:** 55:32

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 17:30

**Topics:** "Evangelism Strategies", "Holy Spirit Guidance"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the possibility that the sermons recorded in the book of Acts are only outlines or highlights of the actual messages preached by Paul and other apostles. He suggests that the main points are highlighted by Luke, the author of Acts. The speaker also shares his personal experience of using music as a means to connect with people and preach the message of God. He emphasizes the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit and seeking common ground with people in order to share the gospel and bring them to a place of understanding and acceptance.

---

## Transcript

All right, let's open our Bibles to Acts 17 this evening, 17th chapter of the Book of Acts, as we continue to take our journey through this great history of the activity of the apostles and the different people involved in the early church. Father, we pray as we look once again tonight at this great story. We pray, Lord, that you'd inspire us as we look once again at Paul and at his passion to share the gospel with people.

Lord, inspire us. May that be our passion as well. So, Lord, here we are tonight, and we're just wanting you to work in us through your word.

So we open our hearts. We want to receive from you. So bless this time we spend together now, we pray in Jesus precious name.

Amen. So as we continue to follow the Apostle Paul, we have arrived in the city of Athens. And in our previous study, we talked a bit about Paul's experience in Athens.

We talked about what Paul saw in Athens. Paul saw things that the average person wouldn't have seen. The average person would have been there more or less as a tourist and, you know, taking in all of the grand sites and things.

But we saw how Paul, he really centered in on the spiritual condition of the city. And what Paul saw was the idolatry that the people were steeped in. And we saw how he was moved by that, how he was actually enraged.

And how he was desirous to do something to change the direction of that place. And so we saw that he began to reason with the people wherever he could. He began to reason, first of all, in the synagogue, as was his normal procedure when he would go into a community where there was a synagogue.

So he started there and then he went from there into the marketplace. And we saw that the marketplace was really the kind of place where people were just there and looking for something to talk about. And Paul took advantage of those opportunities.

And we talked a bit about how there are places today where we can also reason with people and we ought to seek out those opportunities. And so we continue to follow Paul in this story here. And we pick up with Paul now being brought to the place known as Mars Hill, the place where the sort of academic council of the community would sit and hear different philosophies and different theories and different things like that.

And so Paul's been brought to this place that he might explain to them the message that he's been sharing with people in the marketplace and the message that he shared in the synagogue. And so that's where we pick up the story in the 22nd verse of chapter 17. But remember this.

Keep this in mind that Paul. In his reasoning with them in the marketplace, he had preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. So Paul was communicating the gospel message, as he had done in each and every place where he had gone.

And he hadn't really changed the message. He wasn't seeking to alter his message because of the the environment that he was in. He didn't compromise at all.

He held fast and proclaimed that same message that he had been proclaiming everywhere, the message of Jesus and the resurrection. And so it says in verse 22, then Paul stood in the midst of the Arapagus and he said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious. For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription to the unknown God.

Therefore, the one whom you worship without knowing him, I proclaim to you. So this is how Paul. Begins to speak to these men here now, this place, Mars Hill or the Arapagus, as it says here, same.

Term. This was. Perhaps the equivalent.

Today of the university or the public square, that place where ideas are debated. That place where, you know, ideologies are are even formed and sort of. Developed and discussed back and forth.

So a similar situation presently would probably be the university environment. Or that that aspect of society that. Those types of people would go to be on the university itself.

John Stott, in his commentary on the book of Acts. Kind of taking off on this note here, referring to the need really to see a Christian influence in the area of academia. See a Christian influence in the culture in general and in that part of the culture where, you know, thoughts are developed and they begin to sort of trickle down from there to the general populace.

He said this and let me quote to you from his commentary. He said there is an urgent need for more Christian thinkers who will dedicate their minds to Christ, not only as lecturers, but also as authors, journalists, dramatists and broadcasters, as television scriptwriters, producers and personalities, and as artists and actors who use a variety of art forms in which to communicate the gospel. I agree with him.

With one reservation. But let's first about first talk about the agreement. And then we'll get to the reservation.

You know, part of the problem really in our situation today here in our culture goes back to something that happened in sort of the early to mid part of the last century. And what happened back then is Christians. Sort of just vacated the public square.

Christians just. You know, sort of went on a retreat. And pulled out of a lot of different areas, influential areas of the culture.

And to some degree, what we have today is a result of that. Now, what happened back then is there was a great attack against the scriptures. And.

There were debates and different things that went on at the time, and the Christians just sort of felt that, you know, let's just forget the world. Let's leave it behind. Let's cloister together.

Let's just, you know, sort of isolate ourselves and insulate ourselves against this sinful world that we live in. And so people began to think in terms of, well, it's not really right for a Christian to be in politics. It's not really right for a Christian to be in entertainment.

It's not really proper for Christians to be involved in the arts and things like that. Those areas that have such a tremendous impact on the culture, Christians pulled out of that. And of course, as the Christians pulled out.

It just opened up the opportunity for anyone and everyone else to come in with their ideology and begin to seek to spread that and that is to some degree why we're in the place that we're in today. I mean, why is it that the majority of people in the media. Are opposed to the things of God.

Why is it that their bias is against the church and against Jesus Christ? And why is it that they espouse humanistic and atheistic ideas? Christians pulled out. Now, there are a few Christians that have found their way back in and thank God for them. But I do agree with John Stott here that it would be good to see more and more people getting back into these areas, the universities.

Oh, how desperately we need Christian. People on university campuses, Christian people there as part of the faculty of the universities throughout our country so that they might influence. The next generation that's coming up to lead the nation, how desperately we need that.

But sometimes, you know, the thinking is that, oh, that's worldly, that's, you know, that's the flesh that's, you know, we don't want to go in that direction. And sometimes there's even confusion on the part of young people about whether it would be spiritual to go to college or something like that. And we need to see.

I believe a revival in this area of people getting involved in these types of places and seeking to be an influence there. I mean, after all, these institutions, they're here to stay, it seems. And they certainly are

the ones who are having a tremendous impact upon the culture.

And so why not seek to influence it from the inside? Now, I said that I agreed with Scott, but I did have a reservation. And my reservation is this, that I don't want to overstate it either. And I think that, you know, there there can be that danger of putting too much of an emphasis on, you know, how we need to produce, you know, Christian thinkers and.

You know, journalists and authors and those kinds of things, I mean, yes, I agree, but on the on the other hand, we have to balance it out with the fact that God has already told us in advance that he has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and that to a large degree, God bypasses that part of the world, you know, that that is a reality because God resists the proud and he gives grace to the humble. And in these areas, what you generally generally find are self-sufficient, prideful people. And we already know that God has an inclination toward bypassing those who are prideful, so I think what we have to be careful about doing is going again to another extreme and developing this mentality, which I think has crept into some of the churches today, as I've mentioned this before, you know, it is just a fact we seem to swing from extreme to extreme.

The pendulum never seems to settle in the center, it's always at one extreme or the other, so, you know, back in the early to mid part of the last century swung this way, Christians, let's go, we're bailing out of society, forget it, let's leave it to just rot. Now we see that that wasn't really the best strategy, so in some cases we're going to swing it back, but now we're going to the other extreme. And there are people today who are emphasizing the intellect to the extent that they give the impression that you can't really be an effective witness for Jesus Christ unless you are this great intellectual.

And, you know, you can't really have an impact upon the culture unless you become radically relevant to your culture. And so that's the other extreme that we need to be careful. In going to and I see that a lot in our Christian universities today, the emphasis is on, you know, this type of a thing, so we want to strike the balance.

And I think simply it comes down to each person individually needs to understand the call of God upon their life and pursue that call wherever that call might take them. And I do believe that God would call people into these arenas and take them there. But we must not make the mistake of thinking that unless we infiltrate the media, unless we infiltrate the government, unless, you know, we're in there on that level that we're hopeless and helpless, because that certainly isn't true.

Because God is able to work, and historically speaking, God has many times worked powerfully, mightily, despite the lack of influence in those areas just by touching the common people, so to speak, in in a general sense. The great revivals that occurred in Britain back in the 1700s under the ministries of John Wesley and George Whitefield, John Wesley, his ministry was predominantly to the working class people, but so many people were impacted by his ministry that it changed the course of the nation. You couldn't have that many people transformed without it changing the course of the nation.

So we want to be wise and we want to consider all areas of life as possible areas of service to the Lord and ministry, but we don't want to go to one extreme or the other. We want to strike that Holy Spirit balance. That's really the key, just being in tune with the spirit and letting the spirit lead us.

And so, Paul, here he is in this environment, this highly intellectual and cultured environment here. And so he begins to speak to these that are gathered and he's going to speak to them about the unknown God.

Now they had, as he mentioned, he had been passing through the city and he saw an altar that was dedicated to the unknown God.

So he said, therefore, the one whom you worship without knowing him, I proclaim to you now what Paul is going to do here, which I think is good and wise. Paul is going to seek to connect with these people where they're at. Paul's approach in the synagogue would have been drastically different than his approach was here on Mars Hill.

In the synagogue, Paul is going to be speaking to people who are very familiar with the biblical truths and with biblical history and so forth. So, of course, he's going to start with the scriptures and he's going to bring his message to them from a place that they could comprehend. When he was in the marketplace, he would adapt it there to suit those people within the marketplace.

And I think that's just good common sense as we're ministering to people. Paul spoke of seeking to become all things to all men. And he realized that some people you could say certain things to and it would draw them in.

But if you said other things to him, it would just, you know, have no impact on him at all because they didn't really have any background into that or any capability of really understanding your starting point. And I think this is wise as we seek to minister to people ourselves, we do want to find a place of. Of relating to them, we want to find that place where we can connect with them and begin our witness from that common point there, and that's what Paul does.

So therefore, the one whom you worship without knowing him, I proclaim to you. And now he introduces them to God, the creator, God, who made the world and everything in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, nor is he worshiped with men's hands as though he needed anything since he gives to all life, breath and all things. A good place to start.

And, you know, our culture today, to some extent, would. Have some similarities to this audience that Paul was addressing here in Athens, because today in our culture, you know that just God, just if you go out and talk about God. There are so many diverse concepts of God.

People no longer today know what you're talking about now, 100 years ago in this country, especially if you went out and talked about God, there wasn't any question about who you were talking about. You were talking about the God of the Bible. You were talking about the God and father of Jesus Christ.

But that is not true today. That is not what comes into the minds of people when you mention God necessarily. Francis Schaefer, many years ago, he stated that the time had come when we could no longer just simply talk about God to people.

We had to define who it is that we're talking about. And boy, that that is becoming more and more the case all the time, isn't it now? There's all kinds of attempts to sort of blur the distinctions between, say, the God of the Bible and the God of the Koran and the God of Hinduism and all of the rest of it. So, Paul.

He takes them back to that place. A good place to start, God, the creator, God, who made the world and everything in it. Now, what Paul is going to seek to show them is that.

This whole idolatrous thing that they're steeped in is foolish, and he's going to do that by laying before them who God really is and seeking to show them that this is not the proper means of worshiping God.

These idols are not representations of God. In actuality, the idols degrade God and bring a wrong concept of God to us.

And so he says he's not worshiped with men's hands as though he needed anything since he gives to all life, breath and all things you see among the idolatrous systems. The idea was that, you know, God needed man to satisfy him in some way, shape or form. And in all of the different sacrifices and the activity that the people would go through, those were all means of placating God in some way, shape or form, bringing some sort of fulfillment to him or some, you know, meeting some need that God had.

But Paul says, no, the the true God, the God who made heaven and earth, he doesn't need anything. It's not like. He is dependent on us in any way for any reason whatsoever.

The Lord declared that clearly in the 50th Psalm, because the children of Israel evidently began to think something like that as well. They thought that this whole sacrificial system and everything was something that, you know, God needed them to do for him to fulfill some void in his own being or something like that. And the Lord went on to declare to them that he said, if I were hungry, I wouldn't ask you to give me something to eat.

Because don't you realize? I own the earth and everything in it, the cattle on a thousand hills, they belong to me. God was showing them, look, I'm not asking you to sacrifice because I need anything. And that's what Paul is saying to them here.

And then he says in verse twenty six, and he is made from one blood, every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings so that they should seek the Lord in the hope that they might grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each of us, for in him we live and move and have our being. As also some of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring. So now Paul does something here that is interesting.

Paul, in his presentation, he quotes to them from their own poets as he reminds them here. Now, some people have been really bothered by the fact that Paul quoted from these poets and some others have been really impressed by the fact that Paul quoted from the poets. Some have said, oh, Paul was a true intellectual, look at this cultured man quoting the poets, every one of us.

That's what we need to do to reach our. Our society, we've got to become culture. But then others have said, oh, I get what was Paul thinking, what it quoting the poets of his day.

I think that either one of those responses are the wrong response. Paul is just connecting with people. We do it all the time.

You might quote from a song, not because you believe the song was inspired by God, but because the song illustrates the point that you're making. You might quote from a commercial, not because you believe that the advertisers are inspired by God with their commercials, but because that particular commercial illustrates what you're saying. You might quote from a philosopher, you might quote from some politician or something like that, not because you think that what they're saying is equal to what God is saying, but you're just seeking to connect.

You're you're that's what an illustration is. An illustration serves to connect with people. And that's simply what Paul is doing here.

He's just he's wanting to connect with them. And I don't find any fault with Paul here. I think that what he's doing is what we all ought to do in the in those kinds of situations as we find ourselves, as I mentioned a moment ago, in.

Different types of encounters with people and we begin to understand where the people are coming from, we want to seek a point of common ground with them where we can connect. And so Paul is quoting from their poets not to impress them with his. Culture.

Nor because he thought the poets were prophets, but he's quoting from their poets because he's saying, look, this whole practice that you're involved in, it's even contrary to what you would. Yourself, a spouse and embrace, look, even your own poets say this stuff, so he's just, again, seeking to find that common ground with them. And then he says, therefore, since we are the offspring of God.

We ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance, God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. Now, again, just if I could just stay on this for just a moment here.

Because I do think this is an important thing. When we found ourselves in New York City just after September 11th, 2001. We had some.

Amazing experiences on the streets of New York, some gloriously wonderful opportunities to minister to people. But we did discover in the course. And it took us a couple of days to sort of get a feel for what we were doing, and we realized that there was a right and a wrong way to go about this.

There were lots of people that had come into the city, Christian people coming in. Everyone. Undoubtedly, having the motive of just wanting to help people and minister to people and bless people.

But we saw a lot of people who were not connecting with the suffering people of New York City because. Of the way they were approaching. In.

The thing. And the way they were approaching people, they were not taking a lot of factors into consideration. They weren't really considering.

The event even that created the opportunity and the impact that it had had on people. And some well-meaning, but I think misguided Christians were going about and just aggressively and sort of even obnoxiously just trying to push. The gospel down people's throats and they weren't they weren't gaining any ground whatsoever, and quite honestly, we got there and it took us a couple of days to really get a feel for what the Lord wanted to do.

We had to sort of just, you know, navigate our way through the first few days to see how are we going to do this? How are we going to connect? And what we began to feel, all of us that were involved in this, we began to feel that there was a specific way the Lord wanted us to minister to these people at this time. And there was a way in which we would connect with them if we followed the leading of the spirit. And I think this is really important stuff out of our experiences on the streets of New York City, my good friend Lloyd Pulley has written a little book called Patient Evangelism.

And if you haven't read that book, I would encourage you to pick it up and read it because there's a lot of wisdom in it. Many of the things that he shares in the book were lessons learned there. In that setting, but it was a reminder to all of us that each person and each situation is different.

And each person in each situation calls for a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and a dependence upon the Holy Spirit's leading. You know, there are people who in their evangelistic endeavors, they develop a little system and they never they never go outside the system. They have, you know, the same questions they ask, the same verses they share, and it's a it's a routine.

They could do it in their sleep. And that kind of thing, although God has used that sort of thing and can use that, I don't think that's the ideal situation. I mean, God is bigger than all of our weaknesses and all of our mistakes, and we are thankful for that.

But I do believe that the Lord would have us. In our ministry to people to to connect with them. Not to, you know, just be a person standing there with our hand outstretched in a piece of literature, just sort of here, take this thing.

So you turn a life, man, it's a matter with you. I mean, I don't know about you, but that doesn't do anything for me. I was driving along the coast highway today.

And again, and I'm you know, God bless these people that were out there, I'm not putting them down. And I think, God, I'm sure their hearts, you know, they want to reach people. But I'm driving past.

The pier in Huntington and there's there's a market, there's all kinds of stuff going on and there's a stand set up right smack. I mean, if you were driving Main Street and crossing PCH, you would have run this stand over. It was right there.

And in the biggest, brightest sign you've ever seen, it said, Repent, and then just below it in white and red, it said the blood of Christ. And, you know, I looked at that and I thought, well, OK, yes, the world needs to repent. I don't dispute that.

And it is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, that cleanses a man from all sin. I certainly don't dispute that either. That's a fact.

But I just looked at that and wondered now. I want to know, is that drawing people over to have conversations or is it causing people to look at that and say, oh, my gosh, the Jesus freaks are out today, man, let's let's go the other way. And from what I could tell, there weren't a whole lot of people gathered around the booth.

There were lots of people milling about in the area, but there weren't a whole lot of people gathered around the booth. And again, understand me, I'm not putting these people down. God bless them.

But at the same time, I'm just wondering now, is this really the best strategy? Is this what the Holy Spirit is leading? Us to do at this time, we need to get the gospel out to people. Yes, we do. No question about it.

But how do we go about it? What's the most effective way? What is. The way God would have us to do it, I think I've shared this with you before, but perhaps not. But when I was living in London, I knew that God was calling me to go out on the streets and to preach the gospel on the streets.

And yet. I saw people doing that. And all I could think is, Lord, I don't want to do that.

God, please don't make me do that. I mean, it just doesn't look fun. And beyond that, Lord, it doesn't seem effective.

I mean, I would go by and I would see the guy standing out there with his bullhorn and he was preaching his heart out and people were going out of their way to make sure they, you know, stayed at least 100 feet from him. And I would see this over and over again. But yet, as I would walk around the city, there was this haunting sense from the Lord that I was supposed to get on the streets and do something.

And but I just kept praying and I just kept, you know, asking the Lord for wisdom. And I told the Lord one day in, you know, just sort of a personal conversation I was having with him. I just said, Lord, these people out here, look, I mean, they're this is a this is a misrepresentation of you.

You're not like this. I know you. And the Lord spoke to my heart and said, right, true.

That's why I want you to go out there, because you can represent me properly. And I said, OK, Lord, but Lord, what is the means by which we can connect with the people? How do we do it? And the Lord put on my heart that we needed to use music to do it. And so that's how we began.

And a couple of friends got their guitars and learned some songs, and we went out and they began to do some music and they would sing a few songs and then I would step up and begin to preach. And as you know, as they began to play, people would gather as I began to preach, people would scatter. And so I thought, OK, Lord, I really believe that this is what you know, what you called us to do, but it doesn't seem to be working.

And, you know, we did this for a while and then the Lord just showed me something real simple. I needed to join the band and I had been in bands many, many years earlier and I could still play a few chords and all of that sort of thing. So I got together with the guys and I said, you know what? I think the Lord, you know, what I feel is that as I take that step forward and begin to preach, that's where everything is breaking down, because it's just preaching in that way is just, you know, people.

They're they're afraid of it. They scatter. But I noticed here's what happened.

I noticed that, you know, my friend wearing a guitar, he could talk for an hour and they stand there and listen to him because he had a guitar on. But the moment I walked out there without a guitar, they were like, all right, hit the road. This guy's a preacher.

That guy's a guitar player. This guy's a preacher. We got to go.

And so, you know, I said to the guys, I said, I think that this is what God's saying that we need to do. And so let's have a rehearsal. And I said, I don't want you to have any mercy on me if I can't do it.

You just say, look, Brian, it was a good idea, but no, it's never going to work. And, you know, I passed the audition. Thank God.

And and that's what we did. We went out with the band and it was exactly as I thought. I found that, you know, as long as I had a guitar on, I could say anything I wanted.

I really could. And I could talk as long as I wanted. And sometimes and this is no exaggeration, sometimes we had literally hundreds of people just standing and you could hear a pin drop as we were sharing the gospel of them.

But you see, my point is this. What we had to discover was how the Holy Spirit wanted to communicate. With these people at this time, and I also found that as far as my preaching went on the streets, it was

much different if you would come in the morning to Calvary Chapel Westminster in London and listen to me preach and then see me out on Sunday afternoon in Leicester Square and hearing me preach, you would have found that it was considerably different.

The message was essentially the same, but the method was different because it's two totally different audiences. One was a congregation of Christians who loved God and knew Jesus Christ and had a basic understanding of biblical truth. And so that's you know, that was our common ground and that's where we work from.

But out on the streets, we were dealing with people from all over the world and every conceivable background, and we just assumed they know nothing. And so many times we would talk about God as the creator, like Paul did here, and we would find that just addressing the whole issue of creation would give us an open door with people. And times we would talk about Bible prophecy, times we would talk about just even the authority of the scriptures or the, you know, the greatness of the Bible and things like that, always bringing it back around to Jesus.

But again, looking for that, that common bond. I'll never forget hearing our friends who would go out with us and still have a ministry on the streets there in London. M.O.D. I'll never forget one day as we went out with them listening to these guys take the story of the Titanic and preach the most powerful gospel message from the story of the Titanic.

I mean, it was it was just glorious. So. Again, I think as we look at what Paul is doing here, we have to understand what Paul is doing is he is seeking to connect with these people where they're at.

Now, as we look at this, let's go ahead and read through verse some. Well, let's just finish the chapter. Verse 32, it says, And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked while others said, We will hear you again on this matter.

So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed. Among them were Dionysius, the Arapagite, one of the members of the council there, and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

So. In looking at this whole situation there on Marseille with Paul for a moment, I want to just together evaluate the ministry of Paul in Athens. You see, there are some, like I said, this is this is a controversial text, believe it or not.

There are some that this is the ultimate text for evangelism in our world today, as far as they're concerned. I mean, you can just cut out back 17 and throw the rest of the book of Acts away as you know, from their point of view, because this is it. This is how to do it.

There are others who look at the 17th chapter and think, oh, Paul, he really blew it here, he failed. But as we look at this whole thing, I don't think that either one of those things is really the case. Now, some would say that.

Paul's sermon here is the ultimate model for ministry among the intellectually and culturally sophisticated, and if we're going to reach the intellectuals in our society, if we're going to reach the cultured people, if we're going to infiltrate and impact the universities and, you know, if we're going to succeed as authors or journalists or broadcasters or TV scriptwriters or whatever, man, this is the approach. This is how we've got to do it. Then others say, no, Paul's ministry.

Was a failure, was a failure due to his attempt to be culturally relevant. And they point out the fact that in this message, what Paul did not do was mention the name of Jesus or the cross of Jesus, but I personally don't see it that way. One thing to consider is that this is quite possibly.

Just sort of a skeleton of Paul's message, the key points being highlighted by Luke is the author of Acts. It's not necessarily the entire message, because you can read this message in less than two minutes. I don't think Paul spent a mere two minutes there before these people.

I think what Luke is doing, and I do think you could probably build a case for all of the different sermons that are recorded in the book of Acts. These are outlines of the sermons that were preached, and the main points are highlighted because every single sermon recorded in the book of Acts, you can read in under five minutes. And again, I find it difficult to believe that these guys kept their messages to five minutes and under.

The other possibility, if you don't like that one, is that this could have merely been Paul's introduction. But see, here's the thing to me, we already know from verse. Eighteen, that Paul did preach Jesus to them, it tells us specifically, Paul preached to them, Jesus and the resurrection.

And even here, as he's preaching on Mars Hill. Well, it seems to me that it would have been difficult to talk about the resurrection if you didn't first talk about the fact that someone died. You see, because the resurrection.

Of course, follows a death, and so I don't really see that Paul didn't. Preach Christ here that he compromised in some way because he was trying to connect with these people. What it seems to me, and again, this is my opinion and others have others opinions, other opinions, and that's fine.

But what it seems to me is that Paul. Here is showing us his ability to be flexible and to be led by the Holy Spirit, because different circumstances call for different methods. That, I think, is the best way to evaluate.

The situation there on Mars Hill, I don't think Paul failed at all, some people say, oh, but he did, because, look, there was no church started. There were believers. As a result of the message, some say, oh, well, there were only a few.

Well, I don't think it's wise to judge a person's ministry by the number of conversions that appear to take place. I know of churches where there aren't whole lots of people, but. Is that proper grammar, whole lots of people? That sounded really bad.

Well, you get the picture. But I have no doubt about the calling of the pastor or the godliness of the individual or any of those things. So, again, I just want to.

Toss my lot in with Paul, I think he did. What the spirit led him to do on this occasion, and I think the lesson is for us. Like I've been saying.

We need to approach each and every situation. Seeking to be led by the Holy Spirit and looking for. The opportunity that God will create and seeking to connect with people wherever they're at.

Looking for the common bond. And of course, it's all with the goal of sharing Jesus with them, bringing them to that place of being able to hear the gospel. But I think if we understood evangelism in that sense, that it's a life connecting with another life.

Remember, the word became flesh and dwelt among us. God could have just sent us words. He could have just sent us.

The Bible. But he didn't. He gave us the Bible, but he gave us.

People gifted by his spirit to bring the message of the Bible. You know, if God, if it was just a matter of words. Hey, get your Bible here it is.

Just come on up and take a Bible and we'll see you later. Just go read it. But that's not all there is to it, is there? Sometimes people will say things like, oh, you know, God doesn't need anybody and, you know, all of this.

And you put too much emphasis on, you know, that person and their ministry or whatever. God doesn't need anything. I know people that have gotten saved by just reading one verse of scripture.

Nobody ever witnessed to him. I believe that has happened. But I believe that's the exception, not the rule.

I believe the rule is God uses people. That's certainly what the Bible seems to indicate. We had a bunch of people in here that God used.

And, you know, you think about Jesus and the apostles, he trained them. Prepared them for ministry. He didn't merely have them write the New Testament and say, OK, just go distribute these things, you know, write it down and get it out there.

But they were to be the messengers, they were to carry the message. And you see, that's the thing. It's when a life touches another life.

That's when this the reality of of all of this really hits home. And again, not to say that God can't work independent of people, he certainly can and he can't. I mean, you could scribble a scripture on.

The wall in the bathroom. And somebody could read it and get saved, but we don't exalt that as the ultimate in evangelism scribbling on bathroom stall doors. Now, don't talk to anybody, just go in the bathrooms and write out some scriptures and we'll see the world one to Christ.

In that way. So, you know, it's. Again, here with Paul, to me, I love what happened here.

And Paul preaches, you know, again, the idea that he somehow was, you know, sort of watering things down. I don't think. That if you're wanting to water things down, you talk about judgment.

I don't think if you're wanting to be real culturally relevant, you're going to mention the fact that people need to repent, not only need to repent. People are commanded to repent because there's a God is appointed today in which he's going to judge the world. That is not a seeker sensitive message.

That is a hardcore in your face. You need to get right with God message. But yet, as we do read.

There wasn't the same kind of response in Athens that there was, say, in the different places. It doesn't even seem that there was a grand response in the synagogue. Remember, in Thessalonica, in Berea, well, Berea, Thessalonica and Philippi, there were tremendous things that happened in two of those places.

There was a synagogue and that's where the work began in the synagogue. But in Athens, we don't read anything about any significant results from the ministry in the synagogue. Now, it could be that a lot more happened that we just don't know about.

The New Testament never mentions to us a church in Athens, but it doesn't mean there wasn't one that was established. But even if there wasn't, it just simply means that, you know, there are places that are tough. There are places that are harder than other places.

And there are places where the work is slower and it takes more time and more effort than at other places, and that might have been the case in Athens. Again, I don't see it as a failure on Paul's part just because only a few believed. We don't know all the details and we don't know everything that happened in the future.

And so. Paul does finish up his ministry there in Athens, and after these things, he departs from Athens and he goes into the city of Corinth. And so as we carry on in chapter 18, we'll get into the exciting ministry of Paul, the apostle in the city of Corinth.

And there's some great lessons for us there. Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to just gather, to study together, to consider and to. Lord, think over the scriptures and Lord, as we have considered Paul on Mars Hill and his ministry opportunity.

We thank you for the lessons contained in that story for us. And Lord, you know, we desire to reach people and we know. That ultimately, that is the Holy Spirit's work.

And Lord, we know that you're not bound to any method, you're not hindered by any failure, even on our part. Lord, our prayer is that you'd use us. And Lord, that we would be sensitive to the leading of the spirit as opportunities come our way.

Lord, you know where people are at, you know where they're coming from, you know what they'll identify with and what they won't. And so we ask you. To give us divine guidance as these opportunities arise.

And Lord, we do know that your word is living and powerful. And it's sharper than a two edged sword, and we know that our main objective is to get your word to people. So, Lord, just create the opportunity and give us all that we need when those moments arise to plant that seed that you might work from there, we pray.

In Jesus name, Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11294.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/brian-brodersen/acts-seeking-common-ground/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**