



Series: Types of Evangelism  
Lesson 2: **Intellectual Evangelist**

Adapted from Kelli Mahoney's Handout [Types of Evangelism](#)<sup>1</sup>

Acts 17:16-31

Darrin Woods, Facilitator

- Passage Key Verse: “[B]ecause He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”<sup>2</sup> (Acts 17:31).
- Passage Background
  - Place: Athens, Greece at Areopagus aka Mars Hill, the seat of Greek debate and judicial arguments
  - People:
    - Paul: Apostle who waits for Timothy and Silas to join him after escaping from Berea
    - Epicureans: Greeks who believed “that gods were uninvolved in human affairs, that humans should pursue pleasure, and that there was no afterlife/judgment.”<sup>3</sup>
    - Stoics: Greeks who believed that “god was (1) the world-soul or (2) immanent in all creation (pantheism)...humans must live in harmony with nature ( i.e. god). Reason was the highest good. Self-control, self-sufficiency, and emotional stability [was a goal]...[and they] did not believe in a personal afterlife.”<sup>4</sup>
  - Predicament: Paul’s encounter with the Jews in the synagogue and Gentile in the marketplace builds momentum for an apologetic defense of the Gospel that questioned the misguided knowledge the Epicureans and Stoics had about God, creation, heaven, resurrection, and salvation.<sup>5</sup>
- Passage Discussion:
  - Consider the following questions after reading the description of The Intellectual Evangelist in the [Types of Evangelism](#) Handout and Acts 17:16-31
    - Acts 17:16-17; What provokes Paul’s spirit? How might Paul have reasoned with the Jews and Gentiles to help them understand their sinful behavior?

## Turn Over

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<sup>1</sup> <http://christianteens.about.com/od/christianliving/tp/EvangelismStyle.htm>

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ac 17:31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (1652). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Utey, R. J. (2003). *Vol. Volume 3B: Luke the Historian: The Book of Acts*. Study Guide Commentary Series (206). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>5</sup> Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed.) (553). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.

- Acts 17:18-21; How does your knowledge about the Epicureans and Stoics and their reaction to Paul's words help you understand their motives for taking him to the Areopagus (aka Mars Hill)? Do you feel Paul anticipates this invitation? Why or why not?
  
- Acts 17:22-31;
  - How does Paul begin to use logic to evangelize as he focuses on the altar of the "Unknown God?"
  
  - Paul's statements in Acts 17:28 "in Him we live and move and have our being" and 'For we are also His offspring' are quoted from works of the Cretan poet, Epimenides, and Cilician poet, Aratus.<sup>6</sup> In what ways does Paul's inclusion of the poet's words reflect strategies of an intellectual evangelist when he addresses the Epicurean and Stoics arguments about the "Unknown God?"
  
- List three words that you feel best summarize challenges Paul faced as The Intellectual Evangelist.
  
- Practical Application
  - Role-playing scenarios involving intellectual evangelism strategies
  
  - In your own words, briefly describe what you believe about evangelism based on today's lesson. You can begin your statement with something like: "Evangelism, I believe..."

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<sup>6</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Ac 17:28). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.