

## ADULT STUDY GUIDE

This is the adult component of the Enduring Faith Bible Curriculum. This piece follows the **same scope and sequence** as the other levels: **Early Childhood, Elementary, and Youth**. This alignment presents some amazing opportunities.

- First of all, it helps all ages speak a **common theological language**.
- Second, it helps God’s people build an understanding of the **lifelong nature of learning God’s Word**—that we don’t just learn the narratives once or twice before moving on to other matters.
- Third, and critical to this curriculum, it helps **equip households** to teach the faith at home.

If parents and other adults spend time meditating and discussing the narratives of the Bible while the younger generations in the congregation study the same narratives, then there will be greater opportunity throughout the week to **reflect together** upon what the narrative says and what it means. In other words, studying the narratives of the Bible as adults is a blessing in and of itself, but it also helps **equip parents and faith leaders** to be more confident and feel empowered to extend those conversations into the household.

## FEATURES OF THIS STUDY

This study guide is meant to provide some guidelines and springboards for discussion in your Bible study groups.

- The **first page** of each lesson provides the central focus statements, not only for the Adult level, but also for the other levels. Use this as a way to orient yourself to the **main themes and goals** of the lessons across all levels. You’ll also find helpful **tips for preparation**.
- The **middle two pages** begin with an introductory “**Launch**” section, which provides prompts for beginning the study and an open-ended reflection question to kick off group discussion. The following “**Learn & Live**” section breaks down the text into three to five narrative sections. Each one of these sections has some additional commentary, a reflection question, and some helps to better understand possible answers to the reflection question. The “**Leave**” section provides prompts for a final reflection question and some other considerations to close the lesson. The **sidebars** include leader tips and bonus activities to help you think through options for extending the lesson.
- The **final page** of each lesson is the student piece. Copy one lesson handout per learner, and distribute this at the beginning of class.

## TIPS FOR USE

This study guide is designed primarily to help give you, the leader, some thoughts and prompts to help guide and assist facilitation of the class. Below are some tips for how to use it.

- This is meant to be a Bible study, so each learner will need access to a Bible. Encourage your learners to bring their own to class.
- Don’t neglect the lesson handout. The primary reason for this page is to create some space for each learner to reflect and engage the questions on his or her own. Often, any given group will have one or two vocal learners and others who may not speak up. Consider using techniques to help engage all learners in the process, such as having each learner write down his or her reflection privately before sharing, having each learner share with a partner before opening up discussion, or changing the seating arrangements to create small groups.
- Use the opening reflection question as a time to build community. Adult learners, generally speaking, desire to share their experience with one another, and this lesson starter provides an opportunity for this.
- For each narrative section, ask volunteers to read the text aloud while the rest follow along. Don’t force anyone; adults, like children and youth, may be self-conscious about their reading or public speaking ability.
- Download the Enduring Faith Page from the online digital resource center and hand out copies to your learners. Near the end of the lesson, talk through the prompts, which help the learners extend the lessons in their households throughout the week. Encourage learners to take this page home along with the lesson handout to be used throughout the week.

# THE UNKNOWN REVEALED

Paul  
Preaches  
in Athens  
Acts 17:16–34  
AD 49

## BIBLE TRUTH

God makes Himself known through His Word.

## LEARNER GOAL

I can explain why it is so important that God's people remember that God makes Himself known through His Word.

## BIBLE VERSE

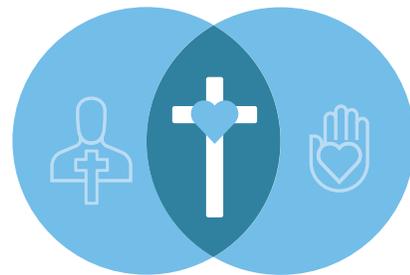
Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

## LAW & GOSPEL

I sinfully act as if I don't know the identity of the true God. **Through the Word, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ's identity as true God.**

## SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

As Paul waits for the other disciples to join him in Athens, he spends time in discussion with philosophers and others in the marketplace. Many temples and altars fill the city of Athens, including an altar dedicated to the "unknown god." One day, Paul speaks at the Areopagus—also called Mars Hill. He uses the altar to the unknown god as an opportunity to teach the people concerning the true God.



## CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

### IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God makes Himself known to me in His Word.

### CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can teach others about Jesus as I share His Word with them.

## GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

*See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.*

### ADULT

I can explain why it is so important that God's people remember that God makes Himself known through His Word.

### YOUTH

I can give examples from the text to show how God makes Himself known through His Word.

### ELEMENTARY

I understand that I can learn about God through His Word.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God wants me to know Him and love Him.

## LESSON PREP

**BASIC** Read the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

**MORE TIME** Read Acts 17:1–15 in *TLSB* with study notes for more context.

**IN DEPTH** Read "Simple Ways to Witness" on page 1425 and "The Bible, Reformation, and Mission" on page 1493 in *TLSB* for more on Christian witness.



### LEADER NOTE

On one hand, we know that we, Christ's Church, have a duty to faithfully bear witness to God's Word in the world. On the other hand, in our daily lives, we all are confronted with different challenges and obstacles as we go about our vocations. If your learners are confused by this question, ask them to consider any times in their past that they would consider especially difficult to talk about Jesus, groups of friends that make it difficult, or times right now at work where people seem hostile to the Gospel. Consider breaking your learners into groups to share their experiences, then lead them into the text where Paul shares Christ in a very difficult and unusual circumstance.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

Consider looking up and sharing images of Athens and Mars Hill, both today and as they may have looked in the past, with your learners to ground them more in the historical reality of this narrative.

# LAUNCH

### WELCOME

Welcome the group, and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests and pray, either now or at the conclusion.

### REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Bible Verse, and Learner Goal. Then, begin with the opening question.

### OPENING REFLECTION

When or where is it most difficult for you to witness Christ to people? Why is that?

# LEARN & LIVE

## ACTS 17:16–21

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

The mission team whom God had sent to Macedonia now works its way down the coast, sharing the Gospel in different Greek cities. Along the way, they run into opposition in Thessalonica, and Paul separates from the rest of the team for a time in Athens, awaiting Silas and Timothy until they are able to join him. In antiquity, Athens had been a prominent seat of western culture, military power, and philosophy. Though now somewhat diminished in importance and not even the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia, Athens is especially vibrant in one sense: it is a city full of pagan idols and religious discussion. Though it appears that Paul had intended to wait for his missionary companions before beginning mission work in earnest, Paul is so moved by the false religions that he gets right to work. He begins with witnessing to the Jews there in the synagogue, then moves to the public forums and marketplaces. Elsewhere, the mission team has met resistance to the teaching of Christ and the resurrection. Though many in Athens who hear do not believe, it appears that the culture there is much more open to new ideas and new religious teachings, and Paul is allowed and even urged to continue to daily ramp up his missionary efforts. Two prominent groups, the Epicureans (who value personal pleasure) and the Stoics (who value personal pride), gather together to converse with Paul and debate his new teaching of the resurrection of Christ. They eventually bring Paul to the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, below the Acropolis, to hear his teaching. There, in full view of the Parthenon, surrounded by idols, philosophers, and false teachers, Paul is given a platform to share God's Word in that pagan culture.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

How did Paul go about witnessing his faith here? What can we learn from his example?

### REFLECTION HELPS

Paul began by observing and being moved by the pagan context of Athens, then he began witnessing to the Jews in the synagogue. From there, he moved on to conversations in the marketplace, and upon that success he was invited to speak on a greater stage. Paul trusted God's Word, and he understood that God alone creates and sustains faith. At the same time, Paul used reason and strategy in analyzing his context, sharing first with those closest to his faith, and then patiently and intentionally sharing the Gospel with all who hear. We, too, trust in God's Word, and seek to use wise and faithful methods to share with people in our various vocations and cultures.

## ACTS 17:22–31

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

Now, given a public platform to speak, Paul makes a masterful witness. He understands that the pagan idol worshipers and philosophers in his midst do not know the Scriptures. At the same time, he sees that among their idols is an altar “to the unknown god.” In their eagerness to learn and experience new religions, the Greeks had left open a spot in their pantheon in case they found something new. Paul seizes the opportunity and proclaims that he knows not just *an* unknown god but the one true God. He speaks of God as the Creator of all things, who is Lord of all and is not bound to altars and temples yet is not far from His creatures. He then speaks of God’s action in the world, how He commands all people to repent of their false idolatry, and at the same time speaks of Christ, the Righteous One, whom God appointed to judge the world and set believers free by His resurrection. God has called and positioned Paul, the master orator and seasoned debater, at just the right time and the right place to bear witness to Christ. God has given each one of His people different abilities, and though most of us likely do not have the skill or opportunities of Paul, we, too, have God’s Word. We, Christ’s Church, proclaim it to the darkness of the unbelieving world, pointing all to Christ and His righteousness, and trusting that the Holy Spirit uses it to create and sustain faith for life.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

In your own words, using examples from the text, describe the strategy that Paul uses in witnessing to the people of Athens. What can the Church today learn from his example?

### REFLECTION HELPS

Paul understands his context, using an example from their culture. Paul proclaims both the judgment and resurrection of Christ. Likewise, the Church today should be wise, careful, and bold in her witness, understanding the worldly culture and boldly pointing all to Christ.

## ACTS 17:32–34

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

At the end of Paul’s speech, three reactions occur. Some mock him, and others express some continued interest. Yet the Spirit moves others to hear the Word and believe. It is possible that Dionysius is a high official of Athens, and tradition notes that he becomes a leader in the Athenian congregation. Little is known about the other named convert, Damaris, except that she’s a woman. Regardless of the details, God works through His Word in the hearts of these hearers, and the Gospel continues to go forth.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

What can the Church today learn from this section as we confess God’s Word in the world today?

### REFLECTION HELPS

Many heard and did not believe, and some heard and wanted to hear more. It is not up to us to make people believe. Instead we are called to faithfully and persistently speak God’s Word to the world.

## LEAVE

### FINAL REFLECTION

Explain why it is so important that God’s people remember that God makes Himself known through His Word.

### TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Pages.

### CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven’t yet, take prayer requests, or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray as you prepare to leave.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

If you have time, encourage your learners to list their various vocations in life (father, mother, worker, neighbor, etc.) and encourage them to identify the different opportunities that these responsibilities afford for talking about our hope in Christ. Then lead a discussion on the importance of supporting missionaries at home and abroad. For more on the how and why of evangelism, point them to the articles on pages 1425 and 1493 of *The Lutheran Study Bible*.



### CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ, God’s Word made flesh, gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation through the Means of Grace.



### LEADER NOTE

Apart from God’s Word, we are in unbelief and destined for hell. The Spirit uses God’s Word and His Word alone to create and sustain faith and grant the gift of eternal life in Christ.

