

THE UNKNOWN REVEALED

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

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

God makes Himself known through His Word.

BIBLE VERSE

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

LEARNER GOAL

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

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.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read Acts 17:16–34 and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

MORE TIME Read “The Holy Spirit Leads God's Church” in *Know the Bible Now*, pages 306–9.

IN DEPTH Read the Third Commandment and its meaning in Luther's Small Catechism.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- Online photos of Athens, Greece
- Poster paper
- Colored pencils

FOR EVERY LESSON

- Device with downloaded music
- Pens or pencils
- Student copies of *Explore Bible Guidebook*
- Bible
- Copies of downloadable activity page
- Supplies for bonus activities
- cph.org/digitalcontent



LEADER NOTE

Before class, find some photos online of Athens, Greece, especially photos of the famous temples in Athens, to show during your introduction. Some photos are also included in the student book.



GUIDEBOOKS

Hand out student copies of the *Explore Bible Guidebook* and turn to Lesson 9.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Check the back page for the “Making a False God” activity to extend the learning and engage hands-on learners.

LAUNCH

PRAY Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for this new day and this new opportunity to be together and to learn about You. In Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.

SING “For God So Loved the World”
“Oh, How I Love Jesus”

Music can be found in the digital resource center.

SAY **Have you ever had to get up in front of people and give a speech? What did that feel like? Were you nervous? Our pastor stands up in front of us in church every week and talks. Do you think he’s nervous?** (If you have time, talk about how pastors prepare for their sermons.) **In our Bible narrative today, we’re going to learn about Paul standing up in front of people and telling them about Jesus. I don’t know if he was nervous or not, but he was in a famous city in Greece called Athens. You can still go to that city today.** (If you have brought digital photos of Athens, show them to students now. Remind students that the Bible is true and its events took place in real places throughout history, and some of those places are still standing.)

LEARN

READ “THE UNKNOWN REVEALED”

Use the *Explore Bible Guidebook* to read the Bible narrative aloud to your students.

DO SOMETHING

FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS This is a narrative that will likely be unfamiliar to your students, so it may need more explaining. After you read each paragraph, stop, explain words or ideas that your students may not understand, and then ask students to make up an action to go with what happened in that paragraph. The action should be simple but enough to help them remember what happened. Then review the narrative by doing each action, in order, once or twice.

FOR OLDER LEARNERS Read this narrative aloud to your students directly from Scripture. There is a lot of dialogue in this passage. After you read a section of dialogue, have students “translate” it into modern language, asking, “How would someone say that today?” Write what students say on a piece of poster paper, and when you’re finished, have students read their own modern translation of this narrative, having volunteers read and act out the parts.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The Gospel message is foolishness to people of this world. This was true in Paul’s day and it continues to be true for us today. And still God desires that all people should know and love Him.
- We are made to be religious. If the true God, the one we were created to worship, is taken out of our lives, we will still be religious about something, usually something we’ve made up ourselves that becomes our false god.
- Many came to believe what Paul said about Jesus, and yet, others would not believe. Missionaries today face the same results.

LIVE

EXPLORE THE CONTEXT

Before you start the discussion questions, use the *Explore Bible Guidebook* for further details about Athens, found on the second page of Lesson 9.

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose from the following questions. For a few helps, encourage students to look in the *Explore Bible Guidebook*.

- ▶ **When you talk to a person who believes something different from what you believe, what are some good strategies for changing his or her mind?** (Be respectful, try to understand what he or she believes, explain why you believe what you believe, trust God’s Word to do its work, and so on. Listen to students’ suggestions.)
- ▶ **What was the most important thing about what Paul talked about? It was God’s Word, and God makes Himself known through His Word!**

Question for older students:

- ▶ **When Paul talked to the Greeks, he tried to use things that the Greeks would know. He did this whenever he talked to any group of people. Why is it important for missionaries or anyone who is sharing Jesus with new people to understand the point of view of the people they are talking to?** (People understand things best based on their own history and experiences. It’s difficult for people to understand new ideas if they don’t connect to their own culture or understanding about the world. This is why missionaries often spend a lot of time learning the culture of the place where they are serving.)

SAY THE BIBLE VERSE TOGETHER

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

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- God’s Word is essential to our faith.
- God’s Word is the power unto salvation.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Ask students to take turns pretending they are Paul preaching, with each one saying one thing that they think Paul might have said to the people in Athens.

LEAVE

SAY We are so thankful that God gave us His Word. It has everything we need to know for our salvation. And God sent His Son, the Word that became flesh, for us, to be our Savior.

SING The Doxology, “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”
“The Lord’s Prayer”
Music can be found in the digital resource center.

PRAY Dear Jesus, thank You for the people who preach about Your Word, both near and far. Thank You for our pastor, who tells us about You every week. Give us the words to say when we have the opportunity to tell others about Your love. In Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.



DOWNLOADABLE PAGE

Extend learning by printing the downloadable activity page found in the digital resource center. See the back page of this guide for details.



CHRIST CONNECTION

In God’s Word we learn of Jesus, the Word made flesh, who died to take away the sins of the world.

