

# 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 can give examples from the text to show how God makes Himself known 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*.

**MORE TIME** Read “Apologetics Helps” on the back page in preparation for the “Live” section.

**IN DEPTH** Read Acts 17:1–15 with study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible* for more context.

## SUPPLIES

### FOR THIS LESSON

- Slips of paper
- Whiteboard or large sheet of paper
- Dry-erase marker or marker
- Sticky notes

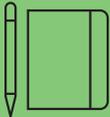
### FOR EVERY LESSON

- Student copies of *Defend Journal*
- Bibles
- Pens
- Shareable images from digital resource center
- Supplies for bonus activities
- [cph.org/digitalcontent](http://cph.org/digitalcontent)



### LEADER NOTE

1. Favorite color
  2. Favorite song
  3. Least favorite food
- (Add more questions if you have time.)



### DEFEND JOURNAL

Hand out journals and turn to Lesson 9.



### LEADER NOTE

If you are short on time or attention span, you can give your group a summary of Acts 17:1–15 instead of reading it. This first question is not in the *Defend Journal*.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

What happens when God’s Word is sown? See “Parable of the Sower.”

# LAUNCH

## WALK-IN QUESTION

Who is God?

## HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW ME?

Give your group slips of paper with the questions in the Leader Note and ask youth to write down their answers. Then have youth pair up and guess their partner’s answers to the questions.

**SAY** How well did you know your partner? Today, we’ll hear how Paul revealed the “unknown god” of Athens as the true God, our Creator and Savior.

**PRAY** Dear God, thank You for revealing to us Your Son, Jesus, our Savior. Help us share the Gospel so more people come to know You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# LEARN

## READ “THE BIG PICTURE” AND TALK IT OUT

► Imagine what it may have been like to enter Athens, a city filled with idols.

## DISCUSSION POINTS

- Let youth share their thoughts.

## LEARN ABOUT “THE UNKNOWN REVEALED”

Begin by reading or listening to Acts 17:1–15. Then ask youth to turn to the map at the back of the *Defend Journal*. Have them trace Paul and company’s journey from Philippi through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica to Berea and finally to Athens.

- **How did the people of Thessalonica and Berea respond to the Gospel? Why do you think that is?**
- Some Jews and Greeks believed, while others did not. God does not force anyone to believe. Some choose to reject God’s gift of grace and forgiveness.

Read Acts 17:16–21 or ask volunteers to read as others follow along in their Bibles.

► **How did Paul go about witnessing to the people of Athens?**

- Paul started by preaching in the Jewish synagogues with those closest to his faith, then in the marketplace, then in front of a large crowd. He used reasoning with the Athenians, because that was how they were used to discussing ideas.

Ask volunteers to read Acts 17:22–31.

► **Describe the strategy that Paul used as he spoke in the Areopagus to the crowds.**

- Paul made a connection with the people’s culture (they were religious and even had an altar to the “unknown god”), then he shared the Gospel with them.

Read Acts 17:32–34.

► **How did the people of Athens respond to Paul’s message?**

- Some people were interested in hearing more; others made fun of Paul.

► **What can we learn from the events of this account as we share God’s Word?**

- We should find ways to connect with people, find common ground, and then share the Gospel without fear, knowing that it is God, not us, who creates faith in hearts.

# LIVE

## DISCUSS “THE KNOWN GOD”

Write on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper “Who is God?” and “How do you know?” Give everyone several sticky notes and let youth write down their answers and stick them near the questions on the board. Talk about what everyone wrote, then discuss the question below. You can use the discussion points and “Apologetics Helps” on the back page of this guide for support as you discuss.

### ► How can I know God?

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

- We can know some things about God from nature. As we look at the beauty, complexity, and grandeur of the earth and the universe, we see that God is powerful, orderly, and creative. But we can’t know all about God just from nature.
- God created humans with a conscience that tells us that there is someone bigger and more powerful than we are. We naturally seek to worship something, to look for something to help us and guide us. But we can’t know about our Savior from our conscience.
- God has given us His Word so we can come to know who He is—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We come to know God’s great plan of salvation only through reading and hearing His Word, where He revealed Jesus, our Savior.
- **John 20:30–31:** Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.
- **John 17:3:** And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

#### CONSIDER “EVANGELISM”

Evangelism is publicly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The word *evangelism* comes from the Greek word *euangélion*, meaning “Good News” or “Gospel.”

- **Think of one way that you can share the Gospel of Jesus with someone this week.**

#### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Check for understanding by asking youth to describe to a partner how we come to know God through His Word.

# LEAVE

Read the Bible Verse, written in the *Defend Journal*:

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

Ask for prayer requests. Offer to pray, or invite a student to pray for everyone.



#### CHRIST CONNECTION

God has given us His Word to reveal to us that Jesus is the Word made flesh, who died to take away the sins of the world.



#### BONUS ACTIVITY

Help youth prepare to share their faith with “One-Minute Witness.”



#### SHAREABLE DOWNLOAD

Connect with youth before and after the lesson by using the shareable images from the digital resource center.

# APOLOGETICS HELPS

## DEFEND THE FAITH

The people of Athens enjoyed debating new thoughts and ideas. They followed various systems of philosophy. Some of those who debated with Paul followed Epicurean philosophy, and others followed Stoic philosophy. Epicureanism taught that the greatest good is to seek pleasure and avoid pain. Stoicism taught that living justly and virtuously is the greatest good. Paul was able to engage in discussion with them and was eventually asked to share His teachings about Jesus and the resurrection.

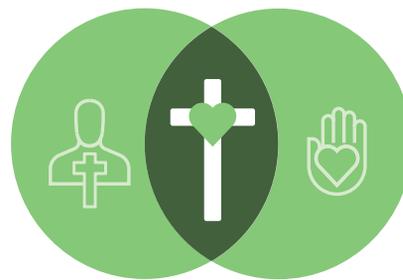
## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ► Why do some people believe when they hear the Gospel while others don't believe?

This is a profound mystery. God does not reveal why some believe and some do not, but there are some things we can say about those who believe and do not believe. God does not force anyone to believe. Instead, through His Word, He offers the gifts of forgiveness and eternal life to all. Those who believe only do so through the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot believe on our own. Some people choose to reject the gifts of God. Jesus spoke of this in His parable of the sower in Matthew 13.

### ► What's a worldview? Why does it matter?

A worldview is the way a person looks at the world, the way they interpret their experiences in the world. For example, a person with a Christian worldview believes all people are born sinful and need a Savior to put us right with God and guide us to do what is right. A person with an atheist worldview may not believe in sin but may instead believe that people are inherently capable of both good and evil, and so laws are created by the people, for the people. These are vastly different ways of viewing the world. When we understand how another person views the world, we have a better idea of how to begin conversations with them about 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.

## BONUS ACTIVITIES

### PARABLE OF THE SOWER

5–10 minutes

Turn to Matthew 13 and read the parable of the sower. This parable sheds light on what happens when we proclaim God's Word. Some reject, but others believe and produce the fruit of faith.

### ONE-MINUTE WITNESS

10–15 minutes

Challenge youth to write a one-minute speech that professes their faith in the one true God. How can they share the truth of the Gospel, the saving love of Jesus Christ, in one minute? Let pairs work together. Ask volunteers to share their speeches with the group.

### WITNESS & OUTREACH

15–20 minutes

Look online for "Witness and Outreach LCMS" and read the information on the LCMS web page. Talk about how youth can witness to unchurched people in their homes, schools, and communities.