

Acts of the Holy Spirit #18, Gospel Green-Thumbs
Acts 17, Week of Nov 19, 2017
Bay Park Life Groups – Leader's Guide

Q → What is your experience with farming? or gardening? In what capacity are you or were involved? Do you still make a hobby or practice out of gardening today?

read Luke 8:4-15

Q → How does the illustration of gardening clarify what evangelism is for you, personally?

On Sunday we learned that evangelism is gardening souls. We plant seeds of truth, seeds of the Gospel, in the hearts of those we encounter. This is something any of us can do, but over time you also develop skill, a Gospel Green-Thumb!

Q → Do you think you have a Green-Thumb when it comes to Gospel gardening? Why or why not?

We looked at Paul as an example of someone with a Gospel Green-Thumb. His time in Athens, ancient Greece, is a powerful example of this.

read Acts 17:16-34

We're going to take some of the things we can learn from Paul about Gospel gardening and work together to apply them to our North American context.

First — Surveying the Land

reread v.16-17

The first step in Gospel gardening is to till the soil, to turn the soil around and prepare it for planting. In Athens we see Paul breaking ground to discover what's underneath. He takes it easy at first, having Gospel conversations but also listening carefully to learn; he's studying the Athenians. Doing this breaks up the soil, it begins to deconstruct people's worldviews and presuppositions. If you place a seed on the surface of the soil, like wind the Enemy will blow it away.

Q → Let's take a moment to reflect and "survey the land" and "till the soil" where we are seeking to plant the Gospel right now! What are important observations we need to make about each of the following when it comes to sharing the Gospel? What things do you think the church needs to learn more about to effectively plant the Gospel in hearts? (Think...what impacts people's perceptions about who God is?)

- in North American culture
- in Canada
- in Kingston

Second — Sweat Buckets

reread v.18-21

What did the Athenians call Paul? *A babbler*. The word the Athenians used is the same word they call a plagiarist. The word for the ‘gods’ they claim Paul is worshipping in v18 is δαίμονιον, which was the word in Greek mythology for a man who becomes God. They also may have confused Paul’s use of the word “resurrection,” as in Greek it is ἀνάστασις, and the Greeks may have thought it was a name for a female goddess, Anastasia.

Now...that is one MAJOR confusion. Paul was seriously misunderstood. Think about it. The Apostle Paul was not excelling at evangelism. He’d spent the last few weeks, months?, trying to share the Good News about Jesus. And the Athenian’s interpretation is that he’s just plagiarizing their pagan religion!

Q → Paul’s message was very misunderstood by the Athenians, but he didn’t give up! In what ways do you think you are commonly misunderstood when you try to plant the Gospel message in other’s souls? What can we do to combat these misunderstandings or false perceptions?

Third — Study the Soil Composition

reread v.22-31

It is clear that Paul knew his audience. He knew about: [1] their religious beliefs; [2] their lack of respect for or ignorance of the Old Testament; and, [3] their philosophical worldviews. Ref. below for further explanation.

Q → In the sermon we talked about seeking a balance between relevance and counter-culturalism. In what ways did Paul tweak or adjust his Gospel message to make it relevant for the Athenians? In what ways was he counter-cultural?

Q → Create a list of words you would use to describe North American culture today. This is the soil in which we’re seeking to plant the Gospel.

Fourth — Sow Appropriate Seeds

Q → Try to remember from the sermon (or pick out from v22-31) the “timbits of the Gospel” [bite-size truths] Paul provided to the Athenians? [1] God’s Character [2] Human Nature [3] The Way to God [4] Jesus of Nazareth [5] Judgment & Resurrection

Q → What are the “timbits of the Gospel” that are counter-cultural today that we should not sacrifice when trying to be relevant?

Fifth — Surrender the Growth

reread v.32-34 & read 1 Corinthians 3:5-7

Q → What do we learn from these two passages (the Athenian’s response to Paul’s message + what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians) about gospel gardening? Do you find this is hard to accept and practice?