**Acts 17:16-34**

Introduction

I. Noticing the cultural trends

A. Issues regarding sexuality

B. Issues regarding freedom of religion

C. Issues regarding end of life

II. Many Christians tend towards one of two responses

A. We condemn the culture and withdraw from it

B. We assimilate and accommodate and change the gospel (or aspects of the gospel) in the process

C. God calls us to a third way: a biblically faithful engagement with the culture

The Passage

I. Notice Paul’s approach in this passage

A. He was distressed by the idolatry present in the Athenian culture (v. 16). He was jealous (in the good sense of that word) for the one true God.

Are we distressed by the idolatry of our culture or have we grown numb? Are we jealous for the one true God?

B. His response was to reason (v. 17)

He went out and engaged the ideas of the culture

C. He engages in the marketplace of ideas in the public square (v. 18-21)

D. He begins by finding common ground with his hearers (v. 22)

E. His sermon

1. He doesn’t just give his testimony but actually uses reasoning skills

2. He demonstrates his knowledge of Greek culture

3. He uses natural theology

4. He ends with the resurrection

II. In sum, Paul engages the culture with truth

A. See 2 Corinthians 10:3-6: The weapons we use in the culture are ideas.

B. Worldview

1. Worldview = our picture of reality

2. Analogy: a puzzle. Our worldview is like a puzzle. It concerns how we fit all the various ideas/aspects of reality together into a coherent whole

3. Our worldview answers the basic questions of life, such as origin (where do we come from?), identity (Who are we?), meaning (what is the meaning of life?), morality (how are we supposed to live?), and destiny (where are we going?)

4. 3 basic worldviews: theism (= God made all), pantheism (=God is all), atheism (= there is no God at all)

C. Ideas have consequences

Conclusion

I. How can we take Paul’s model of engagement into our own lives?

A. Parents

We need to ground our kids in a Christian worldview. We are the primary disciplers of our kids.

B. Fields of specialization

We can get people of similar fields together in the church (lawyers, teachers, doctors, etc.) to consider together how to bring a Christian worldview to our vocations)

II. The Response of the world to our engagement

A. Some mocked Paul (v. 32). That will always be one of the reactions to God’s Word.

B. Others wanted to hear more (v. 32)

C. We are called to continue to lovingly engage our culture with the truth of Christianity being fully aware of the diverse responses we will receive

III. Books for ongoing learning on this subject

A. *Total Truth* by Nancy Pearcey

B. *Restoring all Things* by John Stonestreet and Warren Cole Smith

C. *Tactics* by Greg Koukl

**Discussion Questions**

1. On Sunday we talked about two reactions many Christians have to the culture. One is to condemn and withdraw from culture and the other is to assimilate and go along with the culture.

Where on that spectrum do you tend to fall and why? What does that look like for you specifically?

2. Read together Acts 17:16-34. Brett made several observations about Paul’s approach to engaging the Athenians. What strikes you in particular about Paul’s approach?

3. On Sunday it was suggested that a first practical place to start is in our own homes. If you have them, how specifically are you trying to give your children or grandchildren a Christian worldview? What are the specific challenges you’ve come across, and what have been fruitful ways of doing that? What issues does this raise for you?

4. Is there anything specific you want to do as a result of Sunday’s message?