

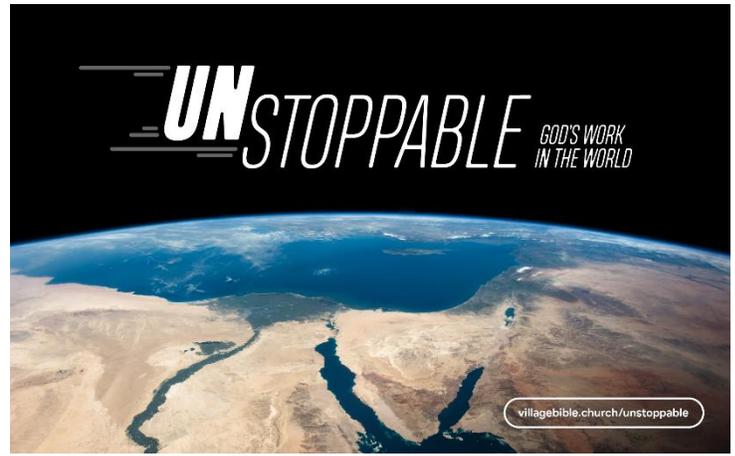


VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

UNSTOPPABLE: God's Work in the World, Part 10

Introducing the Unknown God – Acts 17:16–34

Jeremy Anderson | November 18, 2018



Have you ever been to a conference, or a seminar of any sort, and somebody gets up on the stage and just starts talking? You're sitting in your seat wondering, "Who is this person? Why are they on stage talking? What credentials or experience or education do they have?" So you pull out the conference packet you were given, trying to figure out what session you're in. You eventually figure out you're listening to Joe Smith—but why is he speaking? The next thing you look for then is his bio, trying to figure out who he is. But you're still not clued in as to why you're listening to him.

If you're the sort of person who wants to know these things, you appreciate that at most conferences the speakers are given introductions. Usually someone in charge introduces the speakers, usually including some key elements. They might mention the speaker's education, like that he has a Ph.D. from a certain university. They might describe the field he works in and how long he's been doing that or his professional achievements or the books he's written. "Joe has articles in this publication or has been the president of this organization." All of this is designed to impress you as the listener.

Then at some conferences you'll be told something about the speaker's family. "Joe Smith is married to Mary Smith, they have three children and live in Wyoming." All this gives you a sense that you're getting to know Joe Smith. Finally, they'll say to the audience, "Please welcome to the stage Joe Smith." After the applause, Joe begins to thank people for having him speak and says how excited he is to be there. Next comes the small talk to break the ice and build a little rapport before he gets into his lecture, after which at least part of the audience begins to check out. Since I'm the speaker up here today, we'll see if some of you check out.

If you're wondering who I am, well, you didn't miss any grand introduction. Jeremy does not have a Ph.D. from Moody Bible Institute. They wouldn't even say Jeremy has a Master's degree. They might say I have a great Master...no. They wouldn't mention all my career achievements, nor any books I've written, nor any prestigious schools where I've spoken or taught. They might say, "Here's a youth pastor who loves people, who loves the Lord and who is doing what God has called him to do."

I'm the middle school youth pastor here at Village, if you're here with us for the first time or you're visiting. I've been here for about five years and it's been a great privilege to serve in that role. I've also worked with the First Impressions teams around the church. If you are visiting with us today, I want to extend a warm welcome to you. I'm so glad you've chosen to worship with us today and I hope you enjoy your experience.

I want to invite you to turn to Acts 17. We'll be reading verses 16–34, as we continue through our series called Unstoppable. As we've been working through Acts, we have seen that the gospel message was truly an unstoppable force. It had gone throughout the regions where many heard the good news of Jesus Christ, resulting in churches being established. We're going to read about Paul's time in Athens and the response he was given as he spoke in the Areopagus about the Unknown God. Let's see what God's Word has to tell us.

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

This passage describes Paul's experiences in Athens, but I don't think it was included in Scripture simply to suggest we should be more like Paul. While we can learn things from him, this is simply a story that tells us how the gospel began to take root even in a city like Athens.

Let's rewind time and walk back into this grand city of Athens. As we walk through the countryside and into the city, we see the Acropolis. There stands a familiar temple called the Parthenon. What we would see there today is only broken pillars, but back in the heyday of Athens, it was spectacular. As we walk into the city, we see some of the most stunning art and architecture imaginable. There are sculptures of idols and gods all around us, and we can feel the religious culture of the city.

Paul was waiting for Timothy and Silas, and it might be understandable if he had chosen to take a break until they arrived. Yet as he walked the streets, he was not content to accept that they were worshiping all the various gods. Rather we're told in verse 16 that "his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city full of idols." He didn't want to ignore their need for truth about God.

This reminds us that we too should have a burden for those around us who are lost. We find in this text a key theme that I hope we'll take with us as we leave today. Our burden for the lost should lead us to introduce people to God and warn them of spiritual realities. We'll look at this in three parts.

Our burden for the lost...

Throughout the book of Acts, stories abound of how the gospel went out, being heard and believed by more and more people. One big step took place when Gentiles began to come to Christ. This was initially very challenging to the Jews, who did not understand at first that the Gentiles were also to be included among God's people. We also saw the gospel reach the poor and the alienated. We've seen it reach religious leaders and those totally opposed to religion. It also impacted political leaders.

Today we're seeing an impact made by the gospel on yet another group of people—those who were focused on intellectual wisdom. I hope this encourages us to engage with our culture at all levels. While it's great to come to church, if we're going to have a burden for the lost, we need to do more than just discuss it with other believers in the comfort of this gathering. It takes more than just rallying around the idea—it takes our engagement outside the church in our day-to-day associations with people.

How then do we cultivate a real burden for the lost that goes beyond a simple awareness that they exist? What would it take for our hearts, like Paul's, to be provoked to share the gospel message with those we live with, work with, or go to school with who don't know Jesus?

First, we must interact with the world around us. When Paul came into Athens, he didn't just go sit in the synagogue or someplace where he was comfortable. He was out in the marketplace. He spoke to the Jews in the synagogue about Christ, but he also engaged the culture around him, discussing their beliefs with them.

Christians typically land on a continuum when it comes to interacting with the world. Some Christians focus most on their fear of adopting the sinful habits of their culture. Their response is to seclude themselves, separating themselves from the world's influence as much as they possibly can. They often join a community of other believers who think this way. They're fearful of being caught up in the idolatrous attitudes and behaviors of unbelievers.

They build walls, because for them, their comfort, safety, and holiness are their highest priority. But we need to realize that people who isolate don't actually keep themselves from sinning. We all deal with sins. The only real solution to sin is not isolation, but salvation in Christ. That's the true freedom. Those who decide to separate themselves might be called "hermit Christians."

The second group of people are on the other extreme. These people see their hermit Christian friends and think, "I don't want to be like them. I know I'm supposed to engage the world." But then they go into the world to the extent that they end up looking exactly like the world. They do what the world does. They participate in all the world's activities, declaring, "I'm doing this to reach the lost." But if they're acting just like the lost, how are they reaching them? They are the lost! They will be in church, at least now and then, but if something else seems more important they'll go with that for a little while. If you challenge their choices, they'll claim to be reaching people who don't know Christ. However, we would say they're harming their Christian testimony and abandoning the community they need to be part of. We'll call these "chameleon Christians."

Finally, there are people who stay in the middle of this continuum. These Christians are committed to the gospel work of the Kingdom of God, which means they find a balance between serving the church and being part of that community, yet still reaching out to the lost world around them.

I'm thinking of a game we play with the youth group, a version of tag that I don't even know the name of. The kids pair up or get in groups and then link arms. That means only the people on the end of the chains can tag someone. As you tag someone, they are added to the line. It's great to watch the kids play this, as they end up pulling in all different directions and have to learn to work as a team.

In the same way, the church needs to stay connected as a team in order to reach out—but you're still reaching out as well. We must each be an active member of our church community, connected to brothers and sisters in Christ who will support and challenge us. At the same time, we don't just cling to them; we reach out to those who need to join with our community, inviting others to find the freedom we have found. Let that be a challenge to us today.

When was the last time you invited an unbelieving friend or family over for dinner—just for the sake of spending time with them? Were you invested in those moments—not just to eat or play some games—but intentionally looking for an opportunity to direct them to Jesus Christ?

Second, we need to identify the idols in our own culture. We need to think through the values of the world around us. What are they worshipping? Humans are creatures of worship. Whether or not a person believes in God, they were still created to worship something—and we do. Idolatry is falsely directed worship. As we interact with the world around us, we as Christians need to be aware of this so we aren't influenced to join in their idolatry.

What are some of the idols in our culture today? Think of success. We live in America. The American dream is always changing, so it's hard to say what success is now. Whatever we define as success can drive us. We might want more money in the bank, a nicer car, better vacations, more expensive clothes, fancier gadgets, or bigger homes. People sacrifice so much to gain these things they believe represent success; some even give up their families or friends just to gain a successful career.

Another of today's idols is entertainment. This priority is at an all-time high right now. We have Netflix and streaming everything. Who watches live TV now? It's more convenient to watch what we want and when we want it. Heaven forbid that somebody step on the toes of our leisure and entertainments. I'm not saying they're wrong in themselves, but are they given too high a place in our lives? Do we worship our entertainments, maybe even putting them ahead of God?

Another idol might be our conveniences. We can now shop without leaving our homes. We can get food in three minutes; if it takes four, we're irritated. My wife has worked in food service and has told me stories about how people get so focused on getting things the way they want that they can go to a place like Jimmy John's and still cuss someone out if their food isn't exactly right. I mean, you're getting that upset because you got mayonnaise when you didn't want it?

One thing that is common to all of these idols, however, is that they're centered on ourselves. We live in a world that worships the individual. We may be aware of idols we have, like our cell phones, televisions, or other possessions. But perhaps the greatest idol that threatens the church today is ourselves. Have we become the reason we don't worship God as we should? Think about it. Do

we essentially tell God, “When You fit into my life, then I’m going to worship You”? Or do we arrange our lives around what benefits Him? Is He our highest priority and the object of our worship? Do all our activities, including our entertainments and social interactions, revolve around Him—or is it the other way around?

You might be wondering, “Jeremy, why is idolatry so bad? I realize we as the church need to worship God, but what about unbelievers? They don’t trust God; why should they worship Him?” You’re right. Non-believers are going to be idolaters because they’re lost. That’s why we can’t let the people we live with and work with stay in their idolatry, just because that’s what they do now. Rather, we need to have a burden for the lost. If we’re aware of the people around us who are destined for hell and think, “That’s fine. Of course, if the opportunity comes up, I’ll talk about it,” that’s not having a burden for the lost. If we truly have a burden for the lost, we’ll go out of our way to intervene in their lives and share with them the hope we have found in Jesus.

...should lead us to introduce people to God...

Paul’s visit to Athens reminds us not only that we should have a burden for the lost, but that this burden should lead us to introduce people to God. When we start talking about sharing the gospel, different people in this room will hear that differently.

You might be the kind of person who, when the subject of sharing our faith comes up, your blood starts pumping. You get excited about it. You have a passion for telling others about Jesus. You’re sitting there thinking, “Why can’t we reach every single person for Jesus? Look at how many people are in this service and this is just one service in one of our campuses in one church in our area. How can the Christians in the Fox Valley area not reach every single person for Jesus? We’re going to do this!” You’re so fired up that you’re thinking, “Tomorrow, I know who I’m going to talk to at work. I’ve got to tell them about Jesus. It’s going to happen.”

You are our gifted evangelists—and praise God for you. I’m not that gifted. I’m more like the other person who might be sitting here whose blood is pumping more out of anxiety. “Oh, sharing our faith? I know this is something I’m supposed to do—but really, me? Those other people are so much better at it than I am.”

Sometimes our students will bring their friends to church, hoping that maybe their leaders will tell them about Jesus. But we’re thinking they’re the ones who should say something to them. All of us should be reaching out. I realize that those of you who are gifted in evangelism should be leading the way by your example, but we are all called to introduce people to God, telling them about Jesus.

Whether or not you’re gifted, God has given each of us many opportunities—and you know what they are. You know those times when you’re talking with someone and the Holy Spirit puts something in your heart to say to them. You’re aware you’re supposed to tell them about Jesus, but sometimes you’re too afraid to take that opportunity. You’re afraid they might ask a question you can’t answer, which would make you look bad, which could make the gospel look bad. You’re thinking, “If they’re supposed to believe in God, somebody else will share the gospel with them,” so you skip the opportunity altogether.

Don’t skip those opportunities anymore. Stand up and be bold for Jesus. It’s going to be intimidating for many of us to do this, but sometimes the problem is that we think evangelism is primarily an intellectual thing. It’s about having the right arguments or the right defense. We’re worried about how the person is going to respond. We live in a debate culture and we view evangelism in that light. This can turn God Himself into some kind of idea; something disconnected from Him as a person.

I see in today’s text that Paul’s primary goal was to introduce these people to God personally. He explained Who God is and what He has done. We also have that same ability to share our faith based on our personal experience with God. We don’t have to be scholars to talk about Jesus. In fact, often the more effective evangelists are people who aren’t scholars. The disciples weren’t scholars—the Scripture describes them as “uneducated men.” But they had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They knew Who He was.

As believers, we also have that testimony. All of us can talk about Who we know Jesus to be if we’re walking with Him and have come to know His character. If we view evangelism as talking about the personal God rather than just spewing intellectual facts, we can tell people what God has done.

Paul began his conversation by saying in Acts 17:23–24, *“For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.”* Paul immediately went back to creation to talk about what God had done. This was important to the Athenians, because they believed they were a super breed of humans at the top tier of humanity. They didn’t really know about a Creator or how they got there. Paul pointed out that his God was the God Who created the entire universe, including them.

You and I also have a beginning, but the God Who created everything has no beginning. That means He existed before anything else did. You and I need food—especially steak. We need sleep and water and oxygen. We need all the things God made. We need community. We need medicine. We are not independent creatures. But God does not need anything. He exists independently of anything else.

Paul then goes on to tell how God was involved in history. Some of you may have gotten into discussions in your small groups about the Stoics and Epicureans, but most of the Greeks' understandings of God were essentially deistic. Deism maintains that there was an uncaused God Who was the cause of creation. Then after He created everything, He stepped back and let history run itself. He no longer intervenes in the universe but is only a very distant God. That's why Paul explained that the God he worshiped was intricately involved in human history. He set the boundaries for nations and determined when and where they would rule. Our God is a sovereign God Who is involved with His creation. He's a personal God Who cares about everything He's made.

This is also something we can explain to people. This is the beauty of the Bible. We have stories of how God has worked throughout history to carry out His will. In addition, we can also share with others our own testimonies of how He has worked in our lives—assuming you're aware of what He's done. A lot of times that can be the hard question: what has God done and what is He doing in my life? Some people in here have a 180-degree turnaround testimony and when they share it, people cry their eyes out. "Wow! It's a miracle how God intervened in your life!" Others of you are like me. You just grew up in a Christian family and in the church. You don't really know much about life apart from God. You can look back and recognize a time when you first trusted God, but because you grew up in the church, you already knew all the lingo when you were a kid. But that testimony is no less powerful than the 180-degree testimony. We might applaud one and not the other, but both represent a miracle when God intervened in a sinner's life to change their hearts. And He's still working in all our lives. We should talk about that.

I've mentioned some of the things Paul talked about in the Areopagus—how God is sovereign and independent. Let's think for a minute about His independence. The Athenians would not have understood that. It's said that there were 30,000 idols in Athens for 10,000 people. That's three gods per person. They believed that all their gods needed something from them—that they were required to serve the gods.

Our God does not need anything. He existed without needs throughout eternity. Now we as Christians can fall into the trap of believing, perhaps subconsciously, that God needs us to do certain things. He needs me to stand up here and preach this sermon, as if He couldn't work in your hearts if I didn't do that. God needs me to serve as the children's ministry teacher or a small group leader, or in Awana, or to lead worship, or you fill in the blank.

God doesn't need any of those things. But remember, He created us to be creatures of worship. He created us to worship Him and serve Him. He's completely sovereign. We have to sleep eight hours a night to even function the next day—how could we have something to offer Him? As Paul said in Acts 17:25, God is not *"served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything."*

Whatever you and I have that we think we could offer back to God came from Him in the first place. Paul was using this logic with people who loved to think logically. Anything God might "need" was something He Himself gave us. Chew on that one for a while. How would you serve differently if you served with a desire to glorify God, rather than with a sense that He needed you to do that thing?

In Psalm 50:10–12, God says, *"For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine."* This is a reminder to us that God is independent. He owns everything, and everything is at His disposal. We just have the privilege and opportunity to serve and worship Him, to use the gifts and talents He's given us to bring glory to His name.

As you serve as a children's ministry teacher, you don't do it because God needs you to; you do it because God has given you a passion and the skills to teach and interact with little kids. You want to use these gifts to glorify Him, to brag about how great He is.

I'm thankful for our awesome worship team—these are people who use their gifts and abilities to lead us into worship of the most holy God. Student ministry leaders, small group leaders, elders—you name it—we all serve our God out of love for Him, not out of His dependency on us. He is an independent God.

Secondly, Paul talked about God's magnificence. He said God is too great to be held in temples. Paul was in a city that was very proud of their temples. I can imagine him pointing up to the Parthenon and telling them, "God is not in there." We construct

beautiful and spectacular buildings—but God isn't confined to any building. He's too great and too magnificent for that. He's way too big and powerful. How could the God of the universe be confined in a building? He's everywhere.

Have you thought about what this means? Paul was saying, "God is so great He can't be represented by an idol." I can imagine him pointing all around him when he said that. "See these thousands of idols? The unknown God isn't in any of them. He's far greater and more magnificent than you could ever imagine."

When we witness to others about our faith, it's our chance to brag about God, telling them how great, magnificent and wonderful He is. When you're reading your devotions, are you ever just blown away at the awesomeness of God? As you learn about His character, do you think, "Wow—what a spectacular God!"?

I've been studying through Wayne Grudem's theology book and happened to be reading about God's independence. Grudem commented that our significance as human beings doesn't come from the fact that we can serve an all-powerful God, but that an all-powerful, independent God—Who created the entire universe and Who has no needs whatsoever—loves us so much that He would sacrifice Himself to have a relationship with us. Even though we have nothing to offer Him, He still desires to have that relationship with us. Is that not the most loving God you've ever heard of?

That is a completely different God than the gods the Greeks worshiped. And it's this God to Whom we get to introduce people. Paul's visit to Athens reminds us that we need to have a burden for the lost, and that burden should lead us to introduce people to God.

...and warn them of spiritual realities.

Finally, we need to warn people of the spiritual realities. There is a day of judgment coming. Here's what Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:30–31: *"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."*

Brothers and sisters, we know the truth. Someday this created universe is going to come to an end and God, in His righteousness, is going to judge all of humanity. The only possible way to gain salvation from the wrath of God for our sins is through Jesus Christ. So there's an urgency to our commission to make disciples of all nations, because we don't know when the end is coming. The Scriptures tell us He will come like a thief in the night. Are we making the most of all the opportunities we have to share the good news about Jesus? Like one beggar leading another beggar to bread, we are sinners who found freedom and salvation in Christ. Can we not lead other people to that? Do we not have that burden for the lost that says, "Hey, man, you need to know about Jesus. First, because there's a day of judgment coming and second, because He is an awesome and magnificent God. He loves us so much and I have found such joy, freedom, and peace in my relationship with Him. I want you to experience that too."

Have you found something in Christ that is so spectacular to you that you just have to talk about it? That happens in other areas of your lives. You go see a great movie you absolutely love and you can't help saying to the people at work the next day, "Have you seen this movie? Ah, let me tell you all about it." You're trying to avoid spoilers, but you're so excited about what you saw that it's consuming your thoughts. Or perhaps you watched a great game and you just have to tell people about it. But do we have that same mindset about God? "I've experienced such a loving and awesome God I just have to talk about Him! He's so much a part of who I am, and I want to share that with you."

This proclamation of the unknown God—this introducing of others to Him and warning them of the day of judgment—still results in varying responses from those we're talking to. When Paul mentioned the resurrection from the dead, verse 32 says some people mocked him. It was probably the Epicureans, because they didn't believe in the resurrection from the dead. They believed all we have is lived between the day we are born and the day we die. "Resurrection from the dead? Whatever!" Paul might have been surprised at their mocking. After all, he had just come from Berea and Thessalonica where he had his life threatened for sharing the gospel message. Yet despite the possibility of these people attacking him as well—or even seeking to kill him, which had happened earlier—he never stopped talking about Jesus.

Have you experienced this? Are you so anxious to talk about Jesus that you don't pay attention to the risks? Yes, you might find your message rejected. You might even be rejected personally. But in our culture usually our worst risk is that of being mocked, of people thinking we're crazy to believe in Jesus. Yet we have brothers and sisters around the world who are in prison, who are being tortured or even killed, for declaring their trust in Jesus. We need to have the courage to stand up and share what we know to be true.

In addition to rejection, another response could be contemplation. You might talk to someone about the gospel and your relationship with God, and they might respond with curiosity. They might say, as some people in Athens did in verse 32, *"We will hear you again about this."* Maybe something you said caused them to want to understand more. God used your words to start them thinking. Don't leave those conversations. Help people process what they're thinking. They may ask questions you don't know the answers to, but that's okay. That gives you the opportunity to learn something new as well. Also, pray for people as they contemplate the truths of the gospel message. Perhaps God is working in their hearts in a way that you can't understand, and you can ask Him to continue to reveal Himself to them.

Finally, some people will respond to the gospel with belief. The Areopagus was made up of a group of about a hundred elite members of society. We read in Acts 17:34, *"But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them."*

You might not often have the opportunity to share the gospel and lead someone to Christ in the same encounter. There could be those times when someone responds, "Yes, I want to bow the knee to Jesus," and you get to be there in that moment. But as Paul later wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:7, *"So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."*

We live in suburbia, yet we have a few farmers in our church. But we're all farmers in God's harvest field. Sometimes we'll play the role of the one who plants seeds, conversations that may take root and grow. Some of us are going to come alongside people to "water" what someone else planted. And then sometimes we will have the distinct privilege of being there when God brings in the harvest, when someone places their trust in Jesus Christ.

If you've ever had the opportunity to lead someone to the Lord, it's one of the greatest blessings of being a Christian. I remember a few years ago I was a counselor at family and youth Bible camp. I had a ninth-grade boy in my cabin. He had been at camp a couple times before, so I knew him. One time we began talking seriously about God and what Jesus had done. The boy told me, "I really want to trust in Christ," and he gave his life to the Lord while he was at camp. That was one of the greatest blessings. I was so excited, and it brought to mind what Jesus said about the great rejoicing in heaven that takes place when a sinner is saved. I told this young boy, "If they're partying in heaven because you just got saved, let's party here as well." So we went back to the cabin and he told the other guys what had happened. We all got really excited. It's such fun to celebrate when we see God working in someone's life

We'll get to be part of that with "All In" this December. We'll hear about people who have recently chosen to be disciples of Christ. We need to be taking the opportunities to share with people now, because you never know when you're going to be allowed to be part of a blessing like that. In His graciousness, God allows us to be part of someone's story and be there when they place their trust in Him.

What an incredible blessing that is. To God be the glory for it all. There's not anything you or I can say—it's not our eloquence of speech or cleverness of argument—that turns a sinner's heart to God. It is God Who chips away at the hardness of their hearts. We are just witnesses of that blessing, and He is so good to share that experience with us.

Paul's visit to Athens reminds us that our burden for the lost should lead us to introduce people to God and warn them of spiritual realities. Who are you going to have the distinct privilege of introducing to God this week? Will you take the opportunity God puts before you?