

Learning From the Apostle Paul

2026 Family Camp – Grove Christian Camp

Richard A. Knopp, Ph.D.
www.RoomForDoubt.com

e: Rich@RoomForDoubt.com
www.RichKnopp.com

Event Web Page: www.richknopp/gcc26/

Introduction

- A. Paul, a very interesting character!
 - 1. A Hebrew of Hebrews and a Pharisee (Phil. 3:3-6).
 - 2. A convert to Christ (Acts 9, 22, 26).
 - 3. A mighty missionary (Acts 13:1—21:17).
- B. But Paul was NOT what we might expect.
 - 1. His physical condition.
 - 2. His vision condition.
- C. What can we learn?

II. Paul's Movement to Athens.

- A. Paul's second missionary journey.
 - 1. Philippi > Thessalonica > Berea (Acts 16:9—17:15).
 - 2. Athens (Acts 17:16-34).
 - 3. Going on to Corinth, to Ephesus, and back to Jerusalem.
 - a) In Corinth.
 - b) Tried in court by Gallio (Acts 18:12-17).
 - c) "Gallio Inscription" (AD 51/52 Paul in Corinth).
- B. Later missionary journeys.
 - 1. The third missionary journey (Acts 18:23—21:17).
 - 2. Journey to Rome to be tried in Caesar's court.
- C. Paul was on the **MOVE**. He was seeking **INTENSIVE**. He traveled about **18,000** miles!
- D. YOUR movement?

III. Paul's Milieu within Athens.

- A. An architectural attraction (e.g., the Acropolis, the Parthenon).
- B. A religious city.
- C. A philosophical center.
- D. Paul's reaction:
 - 1. He was **PROVOKED**.
 - 2. He was **PERSUADED**.
- E. How are YOU reacting?

IV. Paul's Message in Athens.

- A. Paul's sermon on the Areopagus or Mars Hill (Acts 17:16-34).
- B. **Epicureans** (< Epicurus: 341-270 BC)
 - 1. First-century beliefs.
 - 2. Modern Epicureans.
 - a) **Richard Dawkins**: "I think a case can be made that faith is one of the world's great evils, comparable to the small pox virus but harder to eradicate" ("Is Science a Religion?" *The Humanist* 57 [1997]: 26).

- b) **Francis Crick:** “The ultimate aim of the modern movement in biology is in fact to explain *all* biology in terms of physics and chemistry” (*Of Molecules and Men*, 1966, p. 10).
 - c) **Jacques Monod:** “Man knows at last that he is alone in the universe’s unfeeling immensity, out of which he emerged only by chance” (*Chance and Necessity*, 1972, p. 180).
- C. **Stoics** (< Zeno: ~300 BC)
- 1. First-century beliefs.
 - 2. Modern pantheism and New Age
 - a) **Shirley MacLaine:** “Know that you are God; know that you are the universe” (Shirley MacLaine, *Dancing in the Light*, p. 350).
 - b) **James Twyman,** “The Moses Code”: “You’re here to use the power of Divinity itself to create a world based on the laws of compassion and peace. That’s the task that lies before us.”
 - c) **Deepak Chopra,** *Jesus: A Story of Enlightenment*: “What if Jesus wanted his followers—and us—to reach the same unity with God that he had reached? My story is based on the premise that he did. By following the young seeker from Nazareth on his path to Christhood, I’ve laid out a map of enlightenment.”
- D. Paul **ENGAGED** the worldviews around him!
- E. Paul’s appeal to YOU.
- 1. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5
 - 2. Colossians 2:8

V. Paul’s Methods in Athens.

- A. He **CONTEMPLATED** his surroundings (Acts 17:16,23).
- B. He **COMMENDED** them.
- C. He **CONVERSED** about his faith wherever he went (Acts 17:17).
- D. He tapped into their **CURIOSITY** (17:19-21).
- E. He traveled to their **TURF** (17:19-22).
- F. He trained in their **THINKING**.
- G. He modified his **METHODS** but did NOT mutate his **MESSAGE**.

Conclusion

Reflection and Conversation Questions

- 1. What strikes you most about the apostle Paul? What do you greatly admire about him?
- 2. What can you learn from the apostle Paul that you could implement more in your own life?
- 3. What “scares” you most or makes you anxious about living as a Christian like Paul did?
- 4. How would Paul engage the Pacific Northwest today? Your city? What might this mean for your church or for you personally?