

CALLED TO LOVE

Lesson 4: Paul's Second Missionary Journey - 2

Session Goals

As a result of conversations and activities connected with this session, group members should:

- Further explore Paul's second missionary journey, his ministry, and the opposition he faced;
- Experience Paul's speech in Athens and explore its theology
- Explore parallels between first-century Corinth and twenty-first-century America
- Expand understandings of life and ministry in the early church through an exploration of the first letter to the Corinthians
- Continue to make connections between the life and message of Paul and their own lives and faith

Biblical Foundation

If I speak in tongues of human beings and of angels but I don't have love, I'm a clanging gong or a clashing cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and I know all the mysteries and everything else, and if I have such complete faith that I can move mountains but I don't have love, I'm nothing. If I give away everything that I have and hand over my own body to feel good about what I've done but I don't have love, I receive no benefit whatsoever.

Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.... Now faith, hope, and love remain – these three things – and the greatest of these is love – 1 Corinthians 13 (CEB)

Paul and Silas completed the Second Missionary Journey, traveling to Thessalonica, Berea, and on to Athens, where Paul reasoned with the Athenians at the Areopagus. At the important city of Corinth he countered immorality at the pagan temples with moving words about God's love.

- What approach did Paul take when he preached to the Athenians? Why? What does it teach us about sharing our faith with diverse groups?
- What were some of the issues that Paul preached about in Corinth? Why?
- What kind of city was Corinth? Why was sexual immorality more common there, and how did Paul try to counter it?
- What does Adam Hamilton say we can learn about political disagreements by observing the Corinthians and what Paul told them?

In Thessalonica and Berea

Read Acts 17:2-4

- Considering the opposition Paul encountered in Thessalonica, What form did Paul's opposition take? What was the result?

- Paul accused them of “turning the world upside down” Do you think that accusation can still be made of believers today? Why or why not?
- What does letter to Thessalonica tell you about Paul’s ministry there?

In Athens

Read Acts 17:16-22a

- What did you think about what Paul had to say about this unknown god?
- Did you notice that he quoted two of our poets? How did he apply those quotes to the god he was talking about?
- What was his argument about not worshiping things made by human hands? Did you agree or disagree? Why?
- What other thoughts do you have about his speech? Do you think you would be willing to hear more?
- Few came to faith under Paul’s leadership in Athens, but those few laid the foundations for a church that impacted millions. The author notes that in our churches, numbers are one indicator of success, but they are not the only measure or even the best. How do you define “success” in the church?
- Other than large increases in membership numbers, what other indicators or metrics can you name that might enable us to measure the kind of success you have described?

In Corinth

- Whom did Paul encounter first in Corinth, and why were those two people there?
- What happened when Paul preached and taught in the synagogue in Corinth? What did he do in response?