

FACILITATOR / TEACHER GUIDE

EMPOWERED

Session 11 – Empowered to Speak Into the World

Acts 17:16–34

SESSION PURPOSE

This session explores how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to engage the world with wisdom, humility, courage, discernment, and faithful presence. Participants will examine Paul’s interaction in Athens and reflect on how Christians can live faithfully in a culture filled with competing beliefs, spiritual confusion, anxiety, and division.

The goal of this session is not argument, defensiveness, or cultural hostility.

Instead, participants should begin understanding that Spirit-led living calls believers to engage the world:

- thoughtfully,
- compassionately,
- truthfully,
- and courageously.

This session also helps participants reflect honestly on:

- fear,
- anger,
- silence,
- cultural tension,
- and how Christians can remain rooted in Jesus without withdrawing from or reacting harshly toward the world around them.

Acts 17 reminds believers that the Holy Spirit empowers faithful presence rather than fearful retreat or hostile confrontation.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand how the Holy Spirit helps believers engage culture faithfully
- Recognize the importance of attentiveness and listening

- Reflect on fear, anger, or anxiety in difficult conversations
 - Explore the relationship between truth, humility, and compassion
 - Understand the difference between faithful witness and argumentative behavior
 - Identify ways believers can remain centered on Jesus in a divided world
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KEY PASSAGES

Primary Passage:

- Acts 17:16–34

Supporting Passages:

- James 1:19
 - Colossians 4:5–6
 - 1 Corinthians 9:22–23
 - John 16:13–14
 - Ephesians 4:15
 - Isaiah 55:10–11
 - 1 Corinthians 3:6–7
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SESSION LENGTH

60–75 minutes

(Adaptable depending on discussion depth and group dynamics.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible (print or digital)
 - Participant Study Guide
 - Pen or journal
 - Comfortable discussion environment
 - Optional whiteboard or notepad for themes
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FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Before leading this session:

- Read Acts 17:16–34 slowly several times
- Reflect honestly on your own experiences engaging people with different beliefs or perspectives
- Prepare for participants carrying:
 - frustration with culture
 - fear about difficult conversations
 - anger or exhaustion
 - uncertainty about evangelism
 - or painful experiences involving hostile or manipulative Christianity

Important:

This session should NOT become:

- political debate,
- culture-war argument,
- apologetics combat,
- or emotionally reactive discussion.

The focus is:

- wisdom,
- humility,
- discernment,
- faithful presence,
- and Spirit-led engagement.

The goal is helping participants think about how Christians engage the world while remaining centered on Jesus.

SESSION FLOW (60–75 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants and reconnect briefly to the previous session.

Suggested transition:

“Last week we explored how the Holy Spirit sustains believers during suffering and difficult seasons. This week we explore how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to engage the world faithfully with wisdom, humility, and courage.”

Open with prayer.

Suggested prayer focus:

- wisdom
 - humility
 - compassion
 - discernment
 - and openness to the Holy Spirit.
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2. OPENING REFLECTION: FAITH & CULTURE (10 MINUTES)

Invite thoughtful and calm discussion.

Discussion prompts:

- Why do conversations about faith often become difficult or emotional?
- How do fear or anger sometimes shape Christian engagement with the world?
- Why do some Christians withdraw while others become combative?
- What does faithful Christian presence look like in a divided culture?

Facilitator Guidance:

Keep the discussion:

- relational,
- reflective,
- and non-political.

Avoid:

- partisan discussion,
- culture-war framing,
- or ideological argument.

The goal is helping participants reflect honestly on how Christians engage the world around them.

3. READING THE PRIMARY PASSAGE (5 MINUTES)

Read Acts 17:16–34 aloud slowly together.

Encourage participants to notice:

- how Paul observes the culture
- how he speaks
- and how he keeps Jesus central throughout the conversation.

Optional Reflection Prompt:

“What part of this story stands out most strongly to you?”

4. MOVEMENT 1 – THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES ATTENTIVENESS, NOT AVOIDANCE (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Spirit-led living requires paying attention to the world around us rather than reacting from fear or assumption.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 17:16–17
- James 1:19
- Colossians 4:5–6

Key Truths:

- Paul carefully observes the culture around him
- Faithful witness begins with listening and attentiveness
- The Holy Spirit forms believers who remain thoughtful and discerning

Key Emphasis:

Paul does not:

- withdraw,
- panic,
- or react with hostility.

He pays attention first.

Facilitator Insight:

Modern culture often trains people toward:

- outrage,
- instant reaction,

- and shallow understanding.

The Holy Spirit forms believers who:

- listen carefully,
- think deeply,
- and engage people with wisdom.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is listening often difficult?
 - How do assumptions affect relationships and conversations?
 - What helps believers remain thoughtful rather than reactive?
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5. MOVEMENT 2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS BELIEVERS SPEAK WITH WISDOM & HUMILITY (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to communicate truthfully without hostility or arrogance.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 17:22–23
- 1 Corinthians 9:22–23
- Ephesians 4:15

Key Truths:

- Paul begins with connection rather than condemnation
- The Holy Spirit produces humility and wisdom
- Faithful witness involves both truth and compassion

Key Emphasis:

Spirit-led witness is not:

- argumentative,
- self-righteous,
- or harsh.

The Holy Spirit helps believers:

- remain truthful,
- compassionate,

- and relational.

Facilitator Guidance:

Some participants may carry painful experiences with:

- aggressive Christianity,
- judgment,
- or manipulative evangelism.

Keep the emphasis:

- relational,
- grounded,
- and Christ-centered.

Discussion Questions:

- What makes difficult conversations feel threatening?
 - What is the difference between conviction and hostility?
 - Why is humility important in Christian witness?
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6. MOVEMENT 3 – THE HOLY SPIRIT ALWAYS POINTS PEOPLE TOWARD JESUS (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit keeps Jesus at the center of Christian engagement.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 17:24–31
- John 16:13–14

Key Truths:

- Paul ultimately points people toward Jesus and resurrection
- The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ rather than drawing attention to self
- Christian witness loses its center when Jesus is replaced by ideology, fear, or argument

Key Emphasis:

The goal of Christian witness is not:

- winning arguments,
- cultural dominance,
- or personal influence.

The goal is pointing people toward Jesus.

Facilitator Insight:

Christians often drift toward:

- silence,
- fear,
- anger,
- or political identity replacing spiritual identity.

Acts 17 continually redirects believers back toward Christ-centered witness.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do Christians sometimes lose focus on Jesus in difficult conversations?
- What helps believers remain centered on Christ?
- How can Christians speak truthfully without becoming defensive or combative?

7. MOVEMENT 4 – THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLS BELIEVERS TO FAITHFULNESS, NOT CONTROL (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

Believers are called to faithfulness rather than controlling outcomes.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 17:32–34
- 1 Corinthians 3:6–7
- Isaiah 55:10–11

Key Truths:

- People respond differently to Paul's message
- The Holy Spirit continues working beyond the conversation itself
- Christians are responsible for faithfulness, not results

Key Emphasis:

Spirit-led witness requires:

- trust,
- humility,
- patience,

- and dependence on God.

Facilitator Guidance:

Many Christians feel pressure to:

- have perfect answers,
- control conversations,
- or force outcomes.

Acts presents a calmer, more trusting approach.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do people often feel pressure to “win” conversations?
- How does trusting God change the way believers engage others?
- What does faithful presence look like in everyday life?

8. SUMMARY & KEY INSIGHT (5 MINUTES)

Key Insight to Emphasize:

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to engage the world:

- thoughtfully,
- compassionately,
- truthfully,
- and faithfully.

Spirit-led living is not:

- fearful withdrawal,
- hostile reaction,
- or cultural domination.

It is faithful presence centered on Jesus.

Key Takeaway:

The Holy Spirit forms believers who remain rooted in Christ while engaging the world with wisdom, humility, and love.

9. FINAL REFLECTION & PRACTICE (5 MINUTES)

Final Reflection Question:

Where do you most need wisdom, humility, or courage in the way you engage people around you?

Practice for the Week:

Encourage participants to:

- Read Acts 17:16–34 daily
- Practice listening more carefully in conversations
- Pray before difficult interactions:

“Holy Spirit, help me respond with wisdom, truth, and love.”

- Reflect on areas where fear, anger, or anxiety shape reactions

Encourage attentiveness rather than pressure.

CLOSING PRAYER (FACILITATOR-LED)

Pray for:

- wisdom
- humility
- courage
- discernment
- and Christ-centered faithfulness

Suggested emphasis:

Ask God to help participants remain rooted in Jesus while engaging the world with compassion and truth.

FACILITATOR REMINDER

This session requires calm and mature leadership.

Do not allow discussion to become:

- political,
- combative,
- reactive,
- or culture-war focused.

The goal is helping participants recognize:

- the Holy Spirit forms faithful presence,

- listening matters,
- humility matters,
- and Christian witness remains centered on Jesus.

If participants leave:

- more thoughtful,
- less reactive,
- and more attentive to Spirit-led wisdom and compassion,

then the session has succeeded.

Keep the tone:

- grounded
- reflective
- pastoral
- and centered on Spirit-dependent living.

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