

Introduction

1. I have always been fascinated by marketing blunders—e.g. when companies come up with some clever marketing campaign that fails miserably because they failed to understand their target audience
2. Some of you know that after college I worked in radio, both as a DJ for a while and then as a marketing rep selling and writing commercials
3. One of the things I knew full well was that in order to write an effective ad, I needed to know not only the product I was advertising but the audience I was advertising to
4. The first part was always easy, but the second part could be a bit more challenging and plenty of companies have found that out, especially when trying to market their products globally

Marketing Blunders (see last page)

5. Paul was a masterful communicator and part of the reason was because he understood his audiences
6. We see this in his sermons in Acts as well as his epistles
7. Over the next two weeks we're going to see two different examples of how he applied this in preaching the Gospel to two different audiences
  - a. The first is in Thessalonica and Berea where the primary audience is Jews and God-fearing Gentiles (17:1-15)
  - b. The second is in Athens where the primary audience is Greek philosophers (17:16-34)

A. Paul and Silas share the Gospel at Thessalonica (17:1-9)

1. After leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas head to Thessalonica:
  - a. It was one of the two most important commercial centers in Greece and the largest city in Macedonia
  - b. It was a port city along the Aegean Sea and sat on one of the major trade routes to the east
  - c. It was also a "free city" which means that while it was officially under Roman rule, there was no Roman garrison there, they were able to mint their own coins, and they were ruled by an elected governor (known as a politarch)
  - d. The population was mostly Greco-Roman, but unlike Philippi there was a sizeable Jewish population there; in fact, the largest synagogue in Macedonia was located there
2. The first thing you'll notice is that Paul did what he always did—he went to the synagogue (READ 1-2):
  - a. Luke reminds us that it was "**Paul's custom**" when he entered a city with a synagogue to begin there; we saw this when he arrived at Perga (13:14) and at Iconium (14:1) and it will be his pattern throughout the rest of Acts
  - b. We talked about Paul's reasons for doing this a few weeks ago but first and foremost was his conviction that the Gospel should first be preached to Jews and then Gentiles; this is the pattern we see with the Bible (Jews called first and Gentiles grafted in) and what we saw with Jesus' ministry (sent to the house of Israel)

- c. Luke tells us that Paul spent three Sabbaths at the synagogue and this is where I want to focus part of our attention this morning because it gives us a description of HOW Paul presented the Gospel
3. Paul demonstrates that Jesus was the promised Jewish Messiah (READ 17:2-3):
- a. Notice that Luke tells us not just what Paul DID but HOW HE DID IT:
  - b. What Paul did was **“reason with them...”**
    - 1) This word implies persuasive speech and/or debate so Paul was trying to persuade or convince his listeners of something
    - 2) It’s a word that Luke uses often to describe Paul’s activity in the synagogues (18:4; 18:19; 19:8-9; 24:25)
    - 3) In 1<sup>st</sup> century synagogues, the teaching time was interactive with attenders being able to ask questions and engage in dialog and debate with the teacher and that is what we see here
  - c. Notice how he did it:
    - 1) He used the Scriptures: **“he reasoned with them from the Scriptures”**—the Bible was his primary source
    - 2) Luke says he was **“explaining and giving evidence [from the Scriptures] that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead...”**
      - a) The word for explaining here means to open something up, to make something evidence, to explain the meaning
      - b) The phrase **“giving evidence”** comes from a word that means to set before, as in setting something before someone
      - c) So what we have is Paul opening up the Word of God, explaining different passages related to the Messiah, and demonstrating how they reveal that the promised Messiah had to not only suffer but rise from the dead
    - 3) Throughout these discussions Paul was revealing how each of these passages were fulfilled in Jesus, **“This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you (present tense) is the Christ.”**
4. The response (17:4-9):
- a. Some were persuaded (READ 4):
    - 1) These **“joined Paul and Silas”** which likely means they continued to meet with them outside the synagogue in what amounted to the beginning of a house church (possibly in Jason’s house)
    - 2) This group was made up of a small number of Jews, a large number of God-fearing Gentiles, and **“a number of the leading women”**:
      - a) This last phrase is more literally **“and not a few of the prominent women”**—in other words, **“quite a few”** as the NET reads
      - b) This is an interesting phrase because the Greco-Roman cultural was very patriarchal and women didn’t generally enjoy the same rights, privileges, or positions of authority as the men
      - c) However, a first century Greek philosopher named Plutarch made reference to women serving in political roles throughout Greece, including a woman in Phrygia that ran the city government and did so with **“excellence”**

- d) Luke uses a very similar phrase in v. 12 and back in 13:50 that clearly refers to women of high rank or prominence within the city
- b. However, as we've come to expect, not everyone was persuaded (READ 5-9):
- 1) Once again, we see the Jews become jealous (see Acts 13:45)—the word here implies more than simple jealousy, but a zealousness and we see that in their actions
  - 2) They go to great lengths to shut down the spread of the Gospel:
    - a) They gather some **“wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar”**—in other words they started a riot (hmmmm...sound familiar?)
    - b) They apparently knew the new Christians were meeting at Jason's house so they attach it looking for Paul and Silas, and when they don't find them, they drag Jason and some others before the civil authorities and accuse them of two things
    - c) The first thing they accuse them of is stirring up trouble all over the world
      - What they really meant was that hordes of Jews were converting to Christianity and they weren't happy about it (see Acts 24:5)
      - And, this was happening all over the known world—this is a GREAT testimony to the power of the Gospel and the Church's faithfulness to Jesus' command to make disciples!
    - d) The second thing they accuse them of is violating the decrees of Caesar:
      - This is a little trickier because we know that Paul and others didn't run around telling Christians to violate Roman law; if anything, Christians were encouraged to honor laws and government officials
      - A clue is their statement about Paul's claim that there is another king, Jesus
      - Roman law prohibited people from making predictions about the fate or future of Roman emperors so referring to Jesus as a king could have been seen as treason and violating that decree
  - 3) We see a familiar pattern here: just as the Jewish leaders whipped up the crowds to condemn Jesus, here we see them doing the same (READ 8-9)

B. Paul and Silas share the Gospel at Berea (17:10-15)
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1. As a result of the threat against Paul and Silas, the church sends Paul and Silas away under the cover of night to Berea which was about 40 miles to the west (READ 17:10):
2. And as we expect, they begin once again at the local synagogue doing the same thing they did at Thessalonica—using the Scriptures to persuade the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah—this time, however, the response by the Jews is very different (READ 17:11-12):
  - a. Luke refers to these Jews as **“more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica”**—this means that they were more open minded and willing to learn
  - b. Luke describes this perfectly and reveals THREE things that made these Jews more noble than their counterparts in Thessalonica:
    - 1) They were eager to learn: **“the word”** in v. 11 refers to Paul's teaching
    - 2) They examined the Scriptures; they didn't just take Paul's word for it
      - a) Luke says they **“examined”** the Scriptures which refers to studying something carefully and thoroughly
      - b) And, they did this **“daily”** which means they invested time and energy into it

- 3) Finally, they then used what discovered in God’s Word to determine if what Paul claimed was true
- c. The end result is found in v. 12 (READ): unlike their closed-minded counterparts in Thessalonica who became jealous, enraged and violent, the open and fair-mindedness of these Bereans lead them to discover the Truth
3. The story wouldn’t be complete, however, without some controversy (READ 13):
  - a. It wasn’t enough for the Thessalonian Jews that Paul and Silas left their city
  - b. When they caught wind of Paul and Silas preaching the Gospel in Berea, they found it necessary to hunt them down and run them out of Berea as well (using the same tactics of **“agitating the stirring up the crowds”**):
    - 1) We saw this in Acts 14 as well when the Jews from Antioch and Iconium chased Paul down at Lystra and nearly stoned him to death
    - 2) Paul was actually guilty of this himself in his former life; after chasing Christians out of Jerusalem, he pursued them to other cities
4. And, like we saw in Thessalonica, due to the danger Paul and Silas faced, the church sent them away (READ 14-15)

C. Takeaways
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1. The first takeaway is that Paul knew and understood his audience and this impacted how he preached and taught:
  - a. In this case, his audience was primarily Jews and God-fearing Gentiles which means they were associated with God’s Word and the concepts within in
  - b. Two of these are mentioned in this passage and they appear to be the focus of Paul’s teaching: Jesus as the Messiah (3) and Jesus as King (7)
  - c. This is different than what he focuses on when he preaches in Athens at the Areopagus when the audience is primarily Greek philosophers (that’s next week)
  - d. This is a good lesson for us: we have a much better chance of winning people to Christ if we understand them and can communicate the Gospel in a relatable way
2. A second take way is this: did you notice how Paul relied upon the Scriptures when sharing the Gospel? This is critical:
  - a. Jesus told His disciples, **“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”** (John 15:3)
  - b. He then prayed to the Father, **“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”**
  - c. The author of Hebrews wrote, **“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”** (Hebrews 4:12)
  - d. David wrote in Psalm 19 that God’s word has the power to restore the soul, give wisdom, rejoice the heart, enlighten the eyes, to warn and keep us from sin...
  - e. In other words, there is nothing as powerful as the Word of God when sharing the Gospel—and this is true whether or not they believe the Bible
3. Another takeaway is how strategic Paul and Silas were:

- a. One of the reasons Paul and Silas went to the synagogues first is because it was familiar territory—they were both Jews and they knew they would have an audience that was already religious and familiar with the Scriptures
- b. However, they also weren't afraid to move on to others when the Gospel was rejected
- c. Jesus even instructed His disciples to do this when rejected (READ Matthew 10:14)
- d. I'm not suggesting we should write off those who don't respond when we share the Gospel, but rather that we shouldn't become discouraged and instead look for other opportunities
- e. In other words, we need to be strategic and look for opportunities

## Epic Fails in Global Branding

<https://www.inc.com/geoffrey-james/the-20-worst-brand-translations-of-all-time.html>

1. An American airline named Braniff International was known for their finely upholstered leather seats and their slogan was "Fly in Leather". However, whoever translated their ads into Spanish probably didn't pass Spanish in high school because they mistranslated it as "Fly Naked."
2. Coors (the beer company) also had a problem with Spanish. Their slogan at one point was "Turn It Loose,". That didn't sit well in some parts of the Spanish speaking world because that phrase in those areas was a colloquial phrase referring to having diarrhea.
3. When Clairol launched a curling iron called "Mist Stick" and tried to market it in Germany they didn't realize that "mist" was German slang for dung or manure. How would you like to curl your hair with a Dung or Manure Stick?
4. Coca-Cola ran into problems in China because they didn't realize that their brand name was sometimes translated as "Bite The Wax Tadpole."
5. Kentucky Fried Chicken also had problems in China because their slogan "finger licking good" was mistranslated as "eat your fingers off."
6. In the 1970's, the Scandinavian company Electrolux tried to market their vacuums in the U.S. with the tag line: "Nothing sucks like an Electrolux."
7. Gerber ran into a problem years ago when they tried to market their baby food in Africa with a cute baby on the label. The problem is that in some African countries like Ethiopia, products usually had pictures on the label to show what was inside since many consumers couldn't read.
8. When the American Dairy Association tried to replicate their "Got Milk?" campaign in Spanish-speaking countries they initially didn't catch the fact that the slogan was mistranslated as "Are You Lactating?"