CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 14 2026

Scripture Story: Acts 17:1-34; Acts 18:1-17.
Commentary: *The Acts of the Apostles* (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 22-24.

faith works



Photo by Juan Gonzalez

flashlight

"In every effort to reach the higher classes, the worker for God needs strong faith. Appearances may seem forbidding, but in the darkest hour there is light above. The strength of those who love and serve God will be renewed day by day. The understanding of the Infinite is placed at their service, that in carrying out His purposes they may not err. Let these workers hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end, remembering that the light of God's truth is to shine amid the darkness that enshrouds our world" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 242).

key text

"This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching."

(Ephesians 4:13, 14, NLT)

what do you think?

In his book *Kingdom Education* Glen Schultz says: "At the foundation of a person's life, we find his beliefs. These beliefs shape his values, and his values drive his actions."*

Define belief and values in your own words.

Belief is _____

Values are _____

INTO THE STORY

"That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men. . . .

"While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there.

"He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, 'What's this babbler trying to say with these strange ideas he's picked up?' Others said, 'He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods.'

"Then they took him to the high council of the city. 'Come and tell us about this new teaching,' they said. 'You are saying some rather strange things, and we want to know what it's all about.' (It should be explained that all the Athenians as well as the foreigners in Athens seemed to spend all their time discussing the latest ideas.)

"So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: 'Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: "To an Unknown God." This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about. . . .

"'God overlooked people's ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.'

"When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, 'We want to hear more about this later.' That ended Paul's discussion with them, but some joined him and became believers. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the council, a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

(Acts 17:10-23, 30-34, NLT)

did you know?

Instead of indulging in poetic descriptions and fanciful representations, which might please the senses and feed the imagination, but which would not touch the daily experience, Paul sought by the use of simple language to bring home to the heart the truths that are of vital importance. Fanciful representations of truth may cause an ecstasy of feeling, but all too often truths presented in this way do not supply the food necessary to strengthen and fortify the believer for the battles of life. The immediate needs, the present trials, of struggling souls—these must be met with sound, practical instruction in the fundamental principles of Christianity" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 252).

OUT OF THE STORY

List all the people and groups that responded positively to Paul's efforts. Next, list the ones who rejected him. What were the differences in attitude or beliefs that led to the different outcomes?

Compare the people in Berea with the people in Thessalonica and Athens. When people talk to me about God and the Bible, which group do I most resemble?

Paul was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw in the city. Do we find ourselves troubled by the godlessness around us? Should we be? Explain.

What do you think is the "big picture" of the passages above? In one phrase, sum up the main thought of the passages above. Share with the class why you made that statement.

What does Paul's discussion with the Athenians tell us about how we should relate to nonbelievers?

punch lines

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" **(Philippians 2:9-11, NIV).**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" **(Acts 1:8, NIV).**

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" **(John 3:18, NIV).**

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" **(1 John 5:13, NIV).**

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" **(Romans 10:17, NIV).**

further insight

"Those who are sincerely seeking for truth will make a careful investigation, in the light of God's Word, of the doctrines presented to them."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 232

"As [the Bereans] compared scripture with scripture, heavenly angels were beside them, enlightening their minds and impressing their hearts."

— Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 231

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read John 3:18.

Do you find that faith and spiritual values influence the choices you make in your life? If so, how?

Sunday

Read Romans 10:17.

As you read the Into the Story section and use the questions in the Out of the Story section, ask yourself: What did I learn that was new and I didn't know before? How does this change the way I relate to God and the Bible?

What does this text tell you about God? What does this text tell you about you? What does this text tell you about your relationship with God?

Monday

Read Ephesians 4:13, 14.

Break down this week's Key Text into a list of benefits that come from having an intimate relationship with God. The depth of a relationship is evidenced in the intimacy and trust we have with the other person. Until we come to know God personally, a relationship with Him will simply be a vague concept. How would you describe your relationship with God? As a vague concept or a reality enacted in your daily communications with Him?

The goal of our relationships with God and others is one of maturity. The Key Text shares how that maturity is achieved: through unity in our faith and our knowledge of Jesus. How are these attributes expressed in our relationships?

Tuesday

Read Acts 1:8.

Read the quote in the Flashlight section of this week's lesson. Then read Acts 18:1-17. What conclusions can you draw about God's promises?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the Punch Lines section of this week's lesson, which verse strikes you as particularly significant today? Why do you think this verse is especially relevant to you today?

How can these Punch Lines help you to be "mature in the Lord"?

Thursday

Read Philippians 2:9-11.

A personal testimony of your life-changing relationship with God is very powerful in underscoring His message of love and forgiveness. Prepare your personal testimony of how you became a Christian and practice it by sharing with the class. Keep it to three minutes, using the following outline:

- Before—What my life was like before I got to know Christ
- During—How I came to trust Christ
- After—In what ways I am different now

Friday

Read 1 John 5:13.

People invest time and energy into attaining better grades, developing their career, their bodies, and relationships, but often ne-glect the spiritual dimension of their lives. How do you invest time and energy into growing your relationship with God?

*Glen Schultz, *Kingdom Education* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1998), p. 39.

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 22-24.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.