

GOD’S DIAMOND DRILLS:
Biblical Principles for Effective Evangelism
(Acts 17:16ff)

I. WELCOME / TEXT / OPENING PRAYER

A. Welcome

B. Text:

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for (his travelling companions) in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him (NIV: distressed), as he saw how the city was completely given over to idols. ¹⁷So he began reasoning with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue, and *also* in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be present. / ¹⁸Now certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were constantly engaging him. Some would ask, “What is this empty talker trying to say?” Others would say, “He seems to be a man who is proclaiming foreign deities” (for Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection). ¹⁹So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, asking, “This new teaching you are presenting—may we hear what it is *all about*?” ²⁰You are bringing some strange ideas³ to our ears, so we want to know what these things mean.” ²¹(Now all the Athenians and *all* the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing else but listening to some new thing or talking about it.) / ²²So standing up in the midst of the Areopagus, Paul said, “Men of Athens, I can see that in every respect you are *a devout⁴ people*; ²³for as I was walking through *your city* and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar bearing this inscription: **To the Unknown God**. Therefore, what you worship without knowing, this I *now* proclaim to you. / ²⁴The God who created the world and everything in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made with *human* hands; ²⁵nor is he served with human hands, as if he stood in need of anything *at all*, since he himself gives life, breath, and all things to all people. ²⁶Moreover, from one *man⁵* he fashioned every nation of the human race, ⁶and *caused them* to reside across the entire face of the earth, having ordained their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling-places. ²⁷He did this so that they would search after God, *and* in hopes that⁷ they would reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us, ²⁸for in him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said: ‘For we too are His offspring.’ ²⁹Since, then, we are the offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine Being is like an image of gold, silver, or stone, formed by the art and ingenuity of man. ³⁰And so, though God *previously* overlooked such times of ignorance, he is now commanding all men everywhere to repent, ³¹for he has fixed a day on which he plans to judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom he has appointed, having furnished proof *of this* to everyone by raising him from the dead.” / ³²Now when they heard about a resurrection of the dead, some *in the crowd* began to scoff and jeer; but others said, “We will hear you again on this *matter*.” ³³So Paul went out from among them. ³⁴However, certain men, after joining themselves to him, believed. Among them were Dionysius (a member of the Areopagus council), a woman named Damaris, and others along with them.

C. Opening Prayer

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Dean’s Diamond Drill (Bathtub Bars and Ceramic Tile: Carbide no, Diamond yes!)

B. Application

- The human heart is hard as a rock (Ezekiel 36:26)
- Many in our post-Christian western culture are hardened to the gospel
- But the sovereign God can drill right through hardened hearts—and turn them into flesh (Ezekiel 36:26)!
- The Church has a role in this; in today's text, God gives us the tools—the diamond drills—he wants us to use as fulfill it

C. Outline for today's (and maybe next time's) talk: **Three Diamond Drills**

- Things we must know about God, the world, and the Church
- Things we must be prepared to do in our outreach to the world
- Things we must expect to happen when we do them

D. Today's Big Idea: *We've got evangelistic work to do, and holy Scripture, by precept and example, equips us to do it.*

III. DIAMOND DRILL # 1: THINGS WE MUST UNDERSTAND ABOUT GOD, THE WORLD, AND THE CHURCH

A. The world is fallen, and therefore given over to idolatry

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for (his travelling companions) in Athens, his spirit within him was provoked to anger, as he saw how the city was completely given over to idols . . .

(Now all the Athenians and *all* the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing else but listening to some new thing or talking about it.)

- Creation, Fall, World System, Idolatry (Eph. 6, 1 Jn. 5)
- Idols of the heart: Pleasure, Power, Fortune, Fame: all held together by Self
- Idols of the head, used to justify the idols of the heart: Atheism, Scientism, Evolutionism, Pantheism (Earth-ism), Postmodernism, Multi-culturalism, Relativism, and Religions of all kinds!

B. God is provoked by these, and we should be too!

- Now is the time, the fullness of time! (John 12)
- The restless, outward thrust of the Spirit of God
- Invasion: We're Going In! (Mt. 12)

C. God wants a confident, skillful people to wade into the idolatrous world system!

¹⁷ So he began reasoning with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue, and *also* in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be present.

- He wants us *in the marketplace*
- He wants us equipped to *reason* with people (Apologetics)
- . . . who DO know the Bible (e.g., Jews, Muslims, Cultural Christians)

Now when they had travelled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² According to his custom, Paul went in to them, and for three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving *from the sacred writings* that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise again from the dead. “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you,” *he concluded*, “is the Messiah.” – Acts 17:1-4 (Can we do likewise???)

- . . . and who don’t! (Today’s young, Hindus, Buddhists, New Agers, etc.) (Can we speak their language???)
- MP: We need to know our Bibles, and also comparative religion and current cultural trends (See my website for helpful links: Aquila Report, World Magazine, American Thinker, etc.)

IV. DIAMOND DRILL # 2: THINGS WE MUST BE PREPARED TO DO

A. Address people’s innate hunger for God by introducing them to the God they already know

²² So standing up in the midst of the Areopagus, Paul said, “Men of Athens, I can see that in every respect you are *a devout*⁴ *people*; ²³ for as I was walking through *your city* and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar bearing this inscription: **To the Unknown God**. Therefore, what you worship without knowing, this I *now* proclaim to you.

- There is a racial memory of the Most High God
- There is a general revelation of the Most High God
- There is a simple way to describe him: He is an Infinite Personal Spirit, the Creator and Possessor of heaven and earth
- Idolaters may resist this, but in their knowers they know it!
- The idols never satisfy
- We are privileged to know the One who does
- Our job is to teach and persuade the idolaters that the God of the Bible and the Most High God are one, and that he alone CAN satisfy their spiritual longings

B. Tell them about His relation to the World (i.e., introduce them to the One True Worldview, something we were created to know, and that we want to know!)

²⁴ The God who created the world and everything in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made with *human* hands; ²⁵ nor is he served with human hands, as if he stood in need of anything *at all*, since he himself gives life, breath, and all things to all people. ²⁶ Moreover, from one *man*⁵ he fashioned every nation of the human race,⁶ *and caused them* to reside across the entire face of the earth, having ordained their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwelling-places.

- In our total text, Paul gives the Athenians the gist of the BWV (the biblical story of reality as a whole) (above, below, within, without, past, present, future)
- In *these* verses Paul focuses on the Ultimate Reality, Origins, and God's relation to the World (God, Creator, Sustainer, Supplier, Disperser, Controller, etc.)
- In a moment, he will give them more: Man's Purpose, Salvation, and Judgment, the World to Come
- Basic Rubric of BWV: Creation, Fall, Redemption
- Fuller Rubric: God, Creation, Probation, Fall, Redemption promised and prepared for, Redemption accomplished, applied, and consummated (Parousia, Resurrection, Judgment, Eternal Life)
- Master these!

C. Help them understand the meaning of this life!

²⁷ He did this so that they would search after God, *and* in hopes that⁷ they would reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for in him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said: 'For we too are His offspring.'

- To TEST men's love of the truth about God through the Gospel, in hopes that they will believe

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ He who believes in him is not condemned; *but* he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who practices evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that it might be made manifest that his deeds have been done in God." – John 3

D. After proper preparation, and as the Spirit leads, call them to repentance, warn them of judgment, and give them hope

²⁹ Since, then, we are the offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine Being is like an image of gold, silver, or stone, formed by the art and ingenuity of man. ³⁰ And so, though God *previously* overlooked such times of ignorance, he is now commanding all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ for he has fixed a day on which he plans to judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom he has appointed, having furnished proof *of this* to everyone by raising him from the dead."

- The Solidarity Principle in Preaching!
- God says WE ALL are to repent of our idolatry!
- God commands US ALL to repent
- God warns US ALL of judgment and eternal punishment
- God gives US ALL hope of eternal life through the CRUCIFIED and RISEN Christ

E. And in and through it all, give them PROOF!

³¹ for he has fixed a day on which he plans to judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom he has appointed, having furnished proof *of this* to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

Note Well Paul’s emphasis on the Resurrection:

- Some would ask, “What is this empty talker trying to say?” Others would say, “He seems to be a man who is proclaiming foreign deities” (for Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection)
- *The single most powerful apologetic tool we have*, identifying Christ as: 1) the God-appointed teacher of the human race, 2) the Son of God, 3) the altogether Righteous One (and our only hope of perfect righteousness), 4) the acceptable sacrifice for sin, 5) the Savior of the World, 6) the solver of the riddle of death and the victor over it, 7) and the giver of eternal good hope: hope of heaven above, life after death, the resurrection of the dead, and a glorious new world to come!

V. DIAMOND DRILL # 3: THINGS WE MUST EXPECT TO HAPPEN WHEN WE DO AND SAY THEM

A. Many will be curious

¹⁹ So they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, asking, “This new teaching you are presenting—may we hear what it is *all about*?” ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas³ to our ears, so we want to know what these things mean.” ²¹ (Now all the Athenians and *all* the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing else but listening to some new thing or talking about it.)

B. Some will turn away

³² Now when they heard about a resurrection of the dead, some in the crowd began to scoff and jeer . . .

Paul in Philippi, Antioch, Thessalonica, Rome . . .

C. Some will join us, having believed and been joined to the Lord

. . . but others said, “We will hear you again on this *matter*.” ³³ So Paul went out from among them. ³⁴ However, certain men, after joining themselves to him, believed. Among them were Dionysius (a member of the Areopagus council), a woman named Damaris, and others along with them.

⁴⁶ Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; *but* since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, take note¹⁸—we are *now* turning to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, *saying*: ‘I have set you¹⁹ in place as a light for the Gentiles, that you should bring²⁰ salvation to the *very* ends of the earth.’”²¹ ⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard that, they began to rejoice and give honor to the word of the Lord; *and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.* – Acts 13

VI. CONCLUSION:

A. You and I are God’s Diamond Drills!

B. This text tells us how we become effective at this. We are to:

- Realize the world is given over to idolatry
- Be aware of the time in which we live (the time of gospel advance), and confident of God’s purpose and the gospel’s power
- Be present in the marketplace of this world
- Be prepared to bore into sinners with love, gentleness, and respect
- Be mighty in the Scriptures
- Be aware of alternative religions, philosophies, and cultural trends
- Have a good handle on the BWV
- Be realistic—*and optimistic*—about the results of our witness
- Be ever grateful that ***he knows our name!***

C. Bottom Line: *Sharpen* yourselves and *commit* yourself, to becoming God’s Diamond Drills!