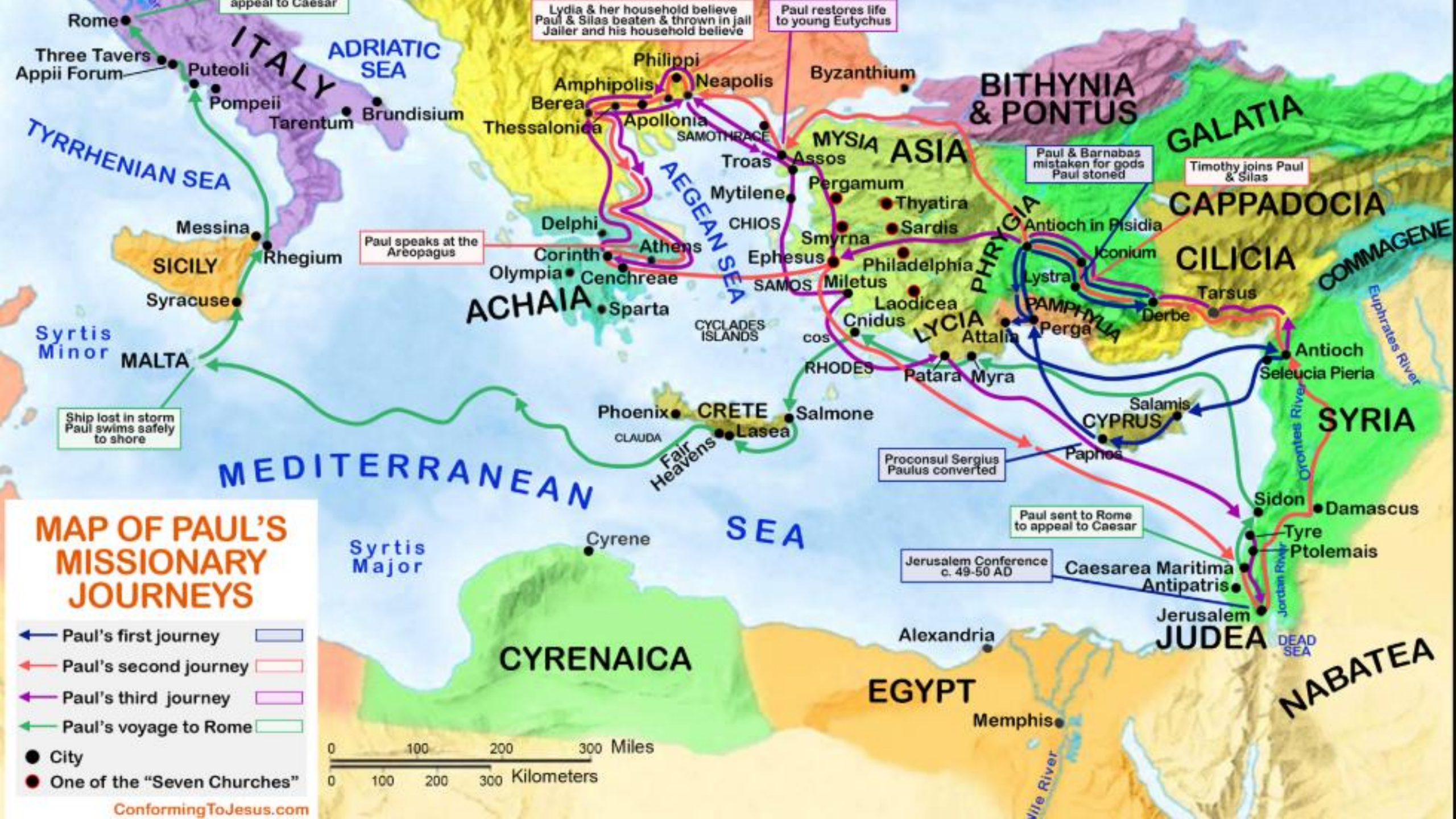




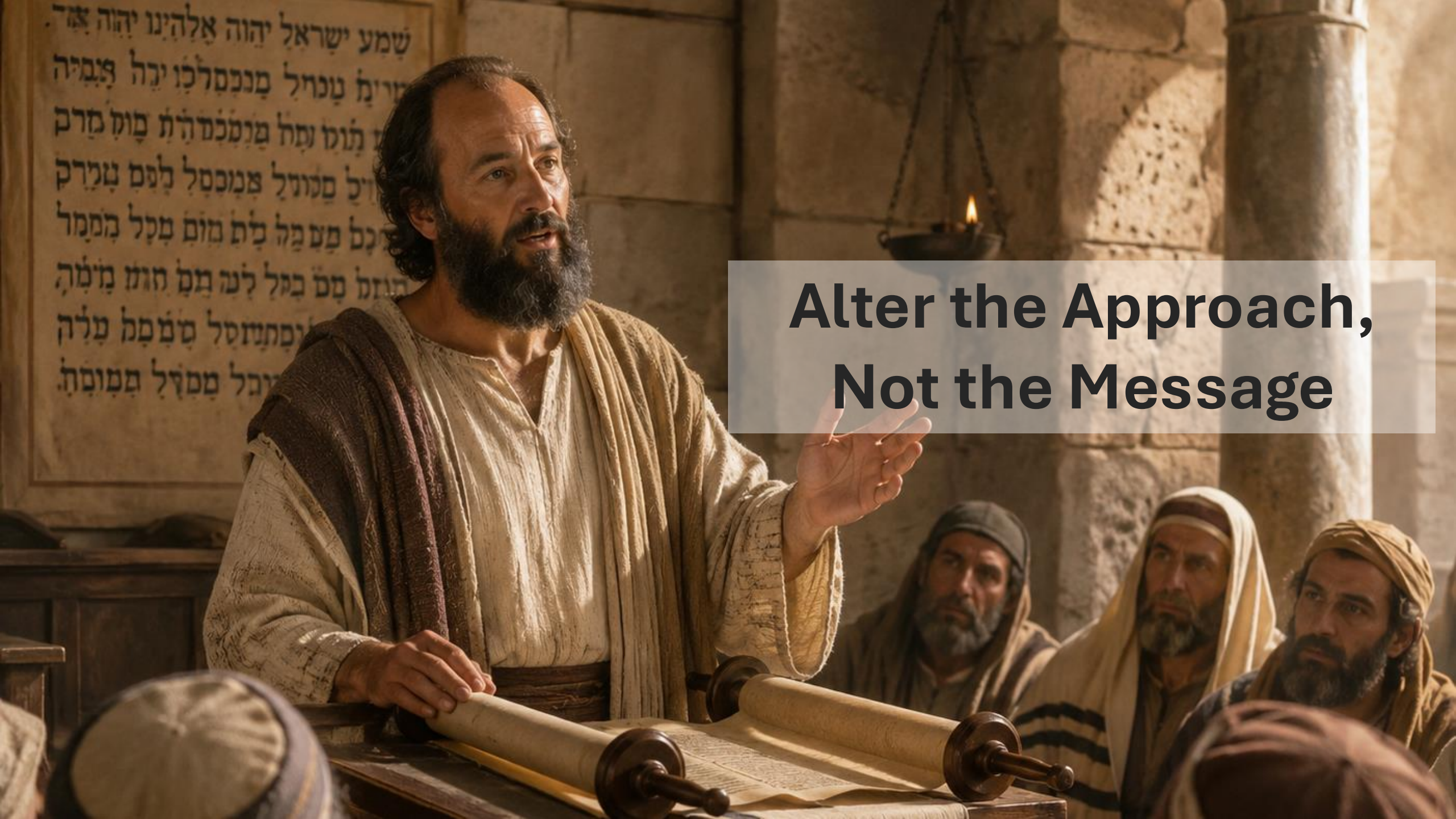
Lessons from the Life of Paul



MAP OF PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

- ← Paul's first journey
- ← Paul's second journey
- ← Paul's third journey
- ← Paul's voyage to Rome
- City
- One of the "Seven Churches"





**Alter the Approach,
Not the Message**



שמע ישראל
יהוה אלהינו
יהוה אחד



Paul's Approach with the Jews

Paul's Approach

He Started with Common Ground

When speaking to Jews, Paul began with beliefs they already shared:

- One God
- Abraham
- Moses
- The Prophets
- The hope of the Messiah

Acts 17:1-4 (ESV)

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,
³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

⁴ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

Paul's Approach

With the Jews, He Reasoned from the Scriptures

In cities such as Thessalonica, Paul entered the synagogue and explained the Scriptures.

"As his custom was, Paul went in unto them, and three sabbath days ***reasoned*** with them out of the scriptures..." (Acts 17:2)

He didn't simply make assertions. He:

- Opened the Scriptures (*Old Testament*)
- Explained prophecies
- Presented evidence



Paul's Approach with the Greeks (Gentiles)

Acts 17:16–21 (ESV)

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”

20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.”

21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

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Acts 17:22–28 (ESV)

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,

25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

27 that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually 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 are indeed his offspring.”

Acts 17:29–34 (ESV)

29 Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”

33 So Paul went out from their midst.

34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Paul's Approach

He started with what he observed in their culture

Paul didn't begin by quoting Jewish Scripture. He began with what he *saw* in Athens:

- Their city was full of idols
- He noticed even an altar “to an unknown god”

He used that as his entry point:

“I perceive that in every way you are very religious.” (Acts 17:22)

Application: He built a bridge from their worldview instead of attacking it immediately.

Paul's Approach

He used their own religious symbols as a teaching point

The altar "To the Unknown God" became his starting text.
Instead of condemning it outright, he reframed it:

"What you worship as unknown, I proclaim to you."

Application: He used their questions and uncertainties
as a doorway to truth.

Paul's Approach

He appealed to creation, not Jewish Scripture

Because his audience was Greek and unfamiliar with Hebrew scripture, Paul argued from general revelation:

- God made the world and everything in it
- God is both Lord of heaven and earth
- God does not live in temples made by man

This would have resonated with Stoic and philosophical thinking in Athens.



Paul's Approach with individuals.

Acts 16:12–15 (ESV)

12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.

14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

15 And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

Paul's Approach

With Lydia

1. Sought out spiritually interested people.
2. Started a conversation.
3. Shared the gospel of Christ.
4. Built on what she already understood about God.
5. Relied on God to open her heart.

An interesting contrast is that with Lydia, Paul used a relational, Scripture-based approach to a God-fearing woman, while at Mars Hill he used cultural observations and philosophical reasoning to reach pagan Greeks. The message was the same, but the approach was adapted to the audience.

This is an example of Paul's principle of becoming "all things to all people" (1 Corinthians 9:22) and not changing the gospel itself.



**Jesus' approach with
the Jews & Leaders**

The Approach of Jesus

He reasoned from the Scriptures they already knew

When speaking to Jewish audiences, Jesus frequently appealed to the Law, Prophets, and Psalms. Luke 4:16-31, Matt. 19:3-6, Matt. 12:1-8, Matt. 22:34-40

To the Pharisees and crowds - Jesus often said:

"Have you not read...?" He pointed people back to Scripture to show that He was the fulfillment of God's promises.

Application: Start where people already have authority and understanding.

The Approach of Jesus

He used parables that were rooted in everyday Jewish life

- Vineyards – Matt. 20:1-16, 21:28-32, 21:33-46
- Shepherds – Luke 15:3-7, Matt. 25:31-46, Mark 14:27-28
- Weddings – Luke 5:33-35, Matt. 22:1-14, 25:1-13
- Farming – Luke 8:4-15, Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 13:31-32

The receptive learned truth; the hard-hearted often realized the parable was about them.

Application: Stories help people see themselves in God's truth.

The Approach of Jesus

He asked penetrating questions

Rather than simply lecturing, Jesus often used questions to expose hearts.

To the lawyers and Pharisees - "What is written in the Law?" – Luke 10:25-28

"What do you think about the Christ?" – Matt. 22:45, Luke 20:41-44

Questions forced people to examine their assumptions.

Application: Questions can reveal what a person truly believes.

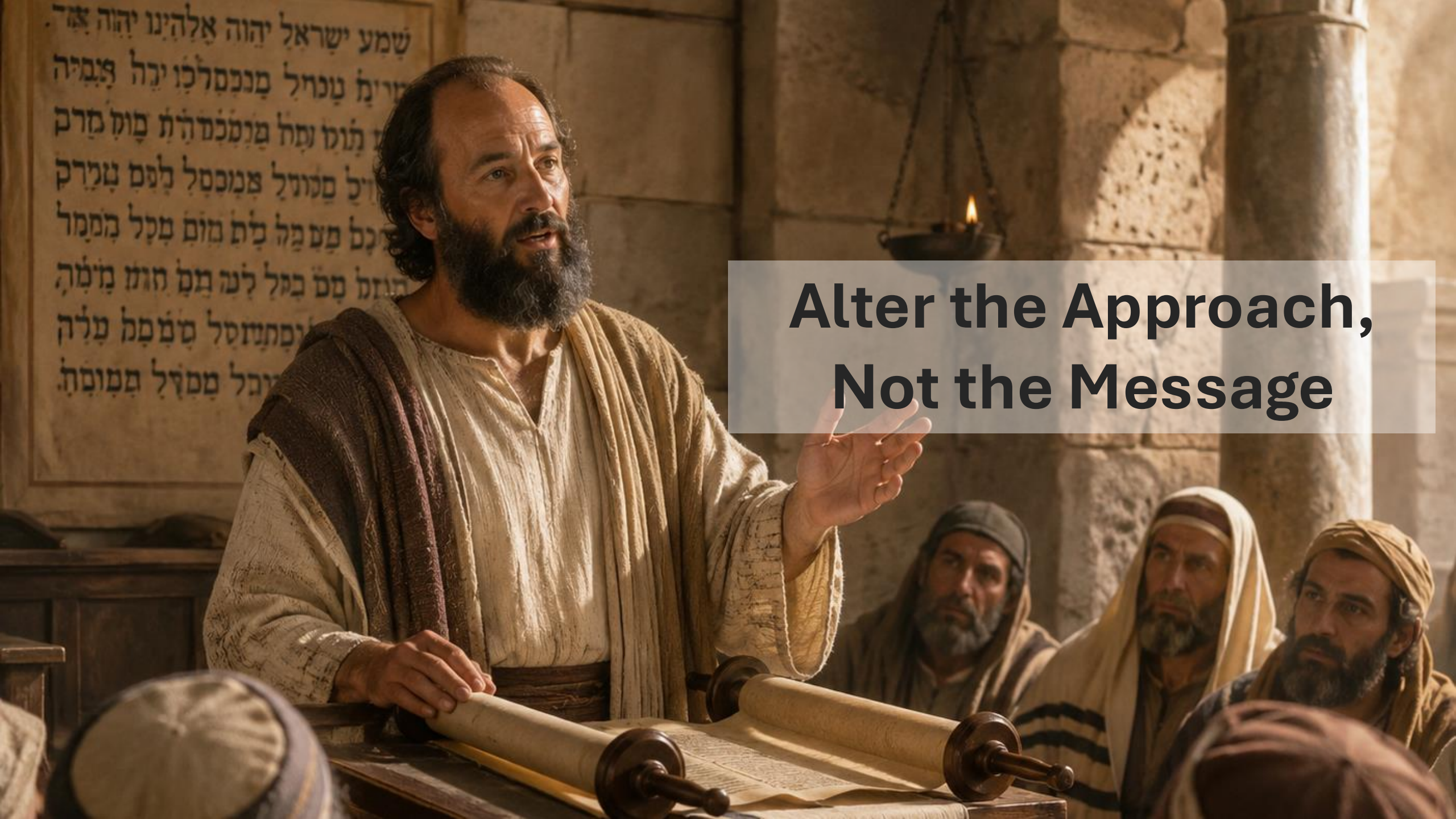


**Jesus' approach with
an individual**

The Approach of Jesus - John 4:7-26

- **Connection** – "Give me a drink."
- **Curiosity** – "Living water."
- **Conviction** – Revealing her life situation.
- **Correction** – Teaching true worship.
- **Christ** – Revealing Himself as Messiah.
- **Commission** – She tells others.

This encounter is a beautiful example of how Jesus met someone where she was, addressed her questions *and* her heart, revealed the truth about Himself, and transformed her into a messenger of the gospel.



**Alter the Approach,
Not the Message**

Our Examples

A useful principle is:

→ *Start where people are, then guide the conversation where you hope it will go.*

Many good conversations begin with three steps:

- Ask a question.
- Listen carefully.
- Ask a follow-up question.

People generally appreciate someone who is genuinely interested in them more than someone who is trying to impress them.

Paul often built a relationship and found common ground before presenting the gospel.



Lessons from the Life of Paul