

Pastor Andrew's Devotion 4th July (Saturday)

Acts 17:16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean."

When Paul preaches the gospel to the Athenians, there were several kind of responses: a) dismissive and derogatory, "What is this babbler trying to say?", b) focus on the differences, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods", and c) seeks to understand, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" When I come across a new teaching, what is my default response? Is it a), b) or c)? In our pluralistic nation we live in, we need to understand the various groups of people and their religious beliefs.

How have I been learning other people's culture and beliefs in my country?
Essentially not very well or not well enough.

- Other religions and their practices and way of life.
- The secularists and their philosophy and way of life.
- Ordinary folks, their hopes and meaning in life.

Paul "reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day" (v 17). How can we do this day by day unless we know the various groups of people well. If we are serious in evangelizing to the various groups of people, we need to know their beliefs and way of life.

Does it matter to you that you learn and understand the various groups of people who are different from you?