Okay, we’re going to start out this morning with a test. That’s kind of rude, isn’t it? This test is designed to determine how old you are: whether you are really old, kinda old, just getting your first touch of grey, or just a pup. Ready?

- Telephones:
  - (Crank) How many of you used one of these growing up? You haven’t just seen one in a picture, you actually used one! You are really old. By the way, Chris, our children’s minister, came into my office and asked, “What’s a crank phone?”
  - (Rotary) How many of you grew up using one of these? You’re kinda old.
  - (Wireless) How many of you grew up using one of these wireless phones? I’ll bet you remember losing the handset when it got separated from its station. You’re showing a little grey.
  - (Cell) How many of you have only used this kind of phone? Pups.

- Television:
  - (B/W) How many of you are so old that you had one of these as your first TV? You had to adjust the antenna just right to keep the image from rolling and to eliminate some of the fuzz (I’m told). And all those vacuum tubes inside? They could knock you across a room (I’m told).
  - (Color) How many of you grew up with one of these? You’re kinda old. I’ll never forget as a kid seeing one of these for the first time? It was amazing!
  - (Projection) How many of you had one of these in your living room as a kid? You’ve probably got a grey hair somewhere.
  - (Flatscreen) Did you know that some of our pups will have seen these other TVs, but they are growing up with these?

- Computers:
  - (Eniac) How many of you remember when the only computers around were in a government lab or a university lab and they filled a room? You are really old!
• (First home computers) How many of you grew up with one of the first home computers like a Commodore 64, or a RadioShack TRS-80, or an Apple 2? Do you remember using “Basic?” You are kinda old.

• (First portable computers) How many of you grew up using portable computers, laptops, something you could carry around with you? This is a picture of my son Andy, using a Kaypro II, one of the first “laptops.” By then the desktops were called 286s, or 386s, or 486s. Remember those? You’re getting some grey.

• (iPad) How many of your pups are growing up with one of these? I took my daughter out to lunch a few weeks ago. She was babysitting Landon Thompson. Landon was not quite two. She gave him her iPhone. Well, Landon turned it on, found the screen with the games, opened the game he wanted, and started playing. He was still just 1!

• One more – Typewriters:
  • (Manual): How many of you grew up on one of these? You are really old. By the way, if you are still using one – you are really, really, really old.
  • (Electric): How many of you grew up with an electric? Weren’t they slick – you kinda old guys? And the real fancy ones had these golf balls you could use to change the font!
  • (Word Processor): Some of you guys, with just a touch of grey, grew up using one of these. You could actually correct the text before pushing print! Wasn’t that cool!
  • (All in one printer): And how many of you pups have only used some form of one of these? You type your stuff on a computer, and send it to a printer. By the way … these are the good old days!

Frequently we have to remind ourselves why we do, what we do, the way we do it. Why do we do what we do, the way we do things, here at Capital City Christian Church? Now some of you guys may like most of what we do here. And some of you guys who really don’t. I doubt any one of us will ever find a church where we like everything about it. But here is something believe here at Capital City. A few weeks I put it like this: “If you know Jesus this church is not “about” you.” Remember that?
Because once we become a Christian it’s not about us anymore; it’s about
honoring him, and serving each other, and reaching them. We are on a
mission from God. You buy that? There is a change that takes place
when a man or a woman becomes a Christ follower: we become less and
less self-centered, and more and more Christ Driven.

Now here’s the deal guys: Our message has never changed. Our focus
on Jesus and living a Christ-centered life has never changed. But the
packaging has changed … a lot … and not by accident. We believe the
message never changes, but how we convey that message has to …
because the world is changing, and people are changing. We believe how
we convey Jesus has to be grounded in an understanding of our culture,
and the people we’re trying to reach. That’s the key idea guys: the
message never changes, the methods must.

Beloit College, up in Wisconsin, publishes what they call a mindset list
every year. It describes the mindset of a typical freshman. What is a
college freshman like today; what does his world look like? There are 75
tidbits on their list for this year’s Freshmen – the class of 2016. Here are
just a few.

- The typical freshman was born in cyberspace: they are electronic
  addicts, always craving newer and better.
- The typical freshman has never seen a paper “airline ticket,” or used
  a set of paper encyclopedias. It’s all digital.
- The typical freshman has to keep reminding his parents that you
do n’t take pictures on “film” and that CDs and DVDs aren’t “tapes.”
- The typical freshman has grown up in a world in which
  unemployment is pretty high, their job prospects are a bit dimmer
  than yours were, and in which America is a little less sure of itself.
- To the typical freshman Robert DeNiro is Greg Focker’s father-in-law,
  not Vito Corleone.
- To the typical freshman, an exposed bra strap is a fashion statement,
  not a wardrobe malfunction.
- To the typical freshman, the “Twilight” zone is about vampires and
  werewolves, not Rod Serling.
- The typical freshman has grown up in a world in which 2/3 of the
  independent bookstores have closed, in their lifetime (but they know
  eBay, and Amazon).
• For the typical freshman, women have always piloted space shuttles and war planes and led the state department.
• For the typical freshman the biblical roots of phrases like “forbidden fruit,” or the “writing on the wall,” or a “good Samaritan,” or the “promised land” are simply foreign to them.
• Randy’s secretary told him that she had just learned that most kids think the stories of David and Goliath and Daniel and the lion’s den are myths – they don’t know they are from the Bible.
• And she cited a study in which they showed pictures of Ronald McDonald and Jesus to 5 year olds. 30% identified Jesus, guess how many identified Ronald McDonald … 100%. Their marketing is better than ours, apparently.

Listen guys: it doesn’t do any good to wish things were different, or to talk about how things were better back then. This is a different world. This is the hand we’ve been dealt. These are the people God calls us to reach. This is our mission field. How do we reach our world for Jesus? How do we do the very best we can right here in Frankfort, not just taking care of our own, but bringing people out there face to face with Jesus and growing them up into fully mature disciples? Let me show you two different models of how to do church.

• Ford Mustang commercial 1965:  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdAIPpqMg3c
• Ford Mustang commercial 2013:  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a5p4KxvujQ

I love that commercial. Did you get it? Did you see it? You see, marketing guys are pretty smart – they study this stuff. You don’t sell a car today the way you sold it 50 years ago – because the culture has changed, and people have changed. We don’t present Jesus today the way we presented Jesus 50 years ago – because the culture has changed, and people have changed. The temptation for most every church is to be a 1965 commercial in a 2013 world – which is one reason that the churches in America are losing this war. And this is not a game. We are losing God’s precious ones, that he has charged us with reaching. Well … not here, if we can help it … which is why we do, what we do, the way we do it, and which is why we are always tweaking, trying to do it better.
Guys, what we are trying to do here is to live out pervasive biblical principle. This is Bible rooted. The apostle Paul says, (this is how the Message puts it): “I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized— whoever. I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I’ve become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saving life.” (1 Corinthians 9.20-22) He says, “I’ll do whatever it takes, whatever works, to bring people to Jesus.” Craig Groeschel put it like this: “We will do anything short of sin to reach people who don’t know Jesus.” So … the message will stay the same, but the packaging is going to change whenever we think there might be a more effective way to bring people to Jesus.

And here in Acts 17 is one of the clearest examples of how this works in all the Bible. We studied Acts 17 last week, so I’m not going to go through it verse by verse today. But I’m going to pull on it for one more big idea -- a huge idea – that is driving us here at Capital City. We’ve been doing a study of the book of Acts since September. We’ve called the series “Act 3.” If you’ve been with us for the whole study you might remember a little about Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 2 describes the birth of the church, in Jerusalem. The apostle Peter preaches a sermon on one of their feast days, the day of Pentecost, and 3000 people are baptized – a pretty good day. He presents Jesus to Jews, and all those who responded are Jews, and the church they formed is a Jewish Christian church.

We are 15 chapters later now in the book of Acts. The apostle Paul preaches a sermon in Athens, to Gentiles. He presents Jesus to Gentiles. It’s the first time in Acts that we have a sermon to Gentiles. And his sermon is way different than Peter’s. These towns aren’t just 100s of miles apart, they are worlds apart culturally. The message is the same: Jesus; the packaging is way different. You can’t preach a Jerusalem sermon in Athens – it wouldn’t work. And you can’t preach an Athens sermon in Jerusalem – it wouldn’t work. And the apostles were driven to use what works. Remember what Paul wrote: to the Jews I do Jew, to the
Gentiles I do Gentile – I’ll do whatever it takes to bring them face to face with Jesus (that’s a Pattison paraphrase).

Let me show you some of the differences between Jerusalem and Athens. And you tell me where we are today – Jerusalem, or Athens?

- Jerusalem had hosted the worship of the one true God for 1000 years. It was a deeply religious town, with just one God. The people in Jerusalem knew their Bible – and they trusted it. They knew about Abraham, and Moses, and David, and the prophets. It was a very moral city, by ancient standards – a strict moral code. And the people there knew their messiah was coming. They were watching for him. And they knew that a man named Jesus claimed to be that messiah, and that he had just been executed by their leaders. And they were hearing that his body was missing.

- Well, Athens was nothing like Jerusalem. Athens was a religious town, but they had a boatload of gods, a smorgasbord of religious options, and the God of the Jews wasn’t prominent there. They worshiped philosophy about as much as they did the gods. It was the home of guys like Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and the philosophical schools of the epicureans and the stoics. They thought they were sophisticated and smart. Athens was a highly sexualized town, a whole lot of sexual deviance – even in their religions. And they had no understanding of the Bible, or the Bible stories. They didn’t know the story of God’s grace through guys like Abraham, and Moses, and David, and the prophets. They didn’t know about a guy named Jesus, who claimed to be some kind of “messiah,” who had been crucified as a lowlife. They didn’t know that his tomb was empty. In fact, the whole idea of a resurrection was just weird … to them. You tell me: are we living in Jerusalem, or Athens. Guys, in my lifetime, in the lifetime of us old guys, our culture has morphed from Jerusalem to Athens.

And that’s why Paul’s sermon in Athens was so different from Peter’s sermon in Jerusalem.

- Peter goes right to the Old Testament story – he shows how it points to Jesus. Paul looks at their idols, and told them that their idols point to Jesus.
• Peter keeps quoting the Bible, because all the Jews accepted it as true. Paul never quotes from the Bible once. The Athenians didn’t know the Bible. He actually quotes from 2 Greek poets. He used their poetry, their words, their music, their forms as bridges to point people to Jesus.

• Peter confronts God’s people with a challenge to accept their messiah. Peter invites people who didn’t know God to give him a hard look.

Guys, the America I grew up in was pretty much an Acts 2 world. The America of my grandkids -- Morgan and Steven -- is an Acts 17 world.

• We grew up in a culture that pretty much accepted that the Bible is God’s word. Billy Graham could say, “The Bible says …” and people thought that settled it. Today if I say, “The Bible says …” a whole lot of people are thinking, “So.”

• We grew up in a culture in which most everyone believed in God (just one God) and most people accepted that Jesus was the unique Son of God. Today a lot of people don’t really believe in God at all, or they believe in some other god, and a whole lot of people – even in the church – don’t believe that Jesus was the unique Son of God. We live in an Acts 17 world.

• We grew up in a culture that by and large valued the traditional family, that by and large accepted a common set of moral values, that by and large accepted that there was truth – some things that are just right, and some things that are just wrong. It is not the same world, guys.

Our culture has changed, our world has changed – and to a large degree, the church has not. Our message is never supposed to change, but how we present Jesus, well … we are in Athens now, guys. And listen – this is huge -- when the church didn’t change, it gradually became an irrelevancy. To some degree … the decay is our fault. If we want to be effective, the message stays the same, the methods continually change – just like they did in the Bible.

Our churches respond to cultural changes in so many different ways. We Christians respond to cultural change in so many different ways.
• Some of us want to boycott the Areopagus. Some churches, some Christians, withdraw from the world. They kind of hunker and huddle together in some carefully designed fortress and complain about the present and idolize the past. Well, not here. We won’t withdraw from our world. We will send you intentionally into the middle of the mess out there with the only cure for what is broken.

• Other churches, other Christians want to stand on the street corners and yell at the Areopagus. They see us as so angry, so judgmental, so mean. We use the Bible as a club, we argue and berate and mock, and then we gather in our clubhouses and sing, “They’ll know we are Christians by our love.” Guys, if we can’t present Jesus with the grace of Jesus, the Kingdom would be better off if we kept quiet. Here at Capital City we won’t drive them into the church with our disdain, we will draw them in with our grace and our love … I hope.

• Other churches, other Christians, welcome them in, if they are willing to look like us, and act like us, and think like us; if they will like what we like and hate what we hate. A lot of us are kind of like the Amish – you are welcome to be one of us, on our terms. Not necessarily on God’s terms, on our terms. Well … not here.

Let me tell you why we do, what we do, the way we do things here at Capital City. We are trying to be an Acts 17 church in an Acts 17 world. We see ourselves as missionaries. You don’t have to go oversees to be a missionary – we are living in a pagan world right here. Do you know what missionaries try to do? They try to learn the language, and learn the dress, and learn the customs, and understand what they people they are trying to reach value, how they think. Then they try to adapt to the people they are trying to reach without violating their life with God. They look for bridges: what can I use, in this world, in their world, to point them to Jesus? How can I communicate Jesus, how can I present Jesus in a way they understand, in a way that is compelling. We are intentionally trying to resist being a member driven church; we are trying to be a mission driven church – a church the unchurched want to attend. We will try to feed everyone who is here, we will try to grow everyone who is here. But we will not succumb to the wistful desire we all feel sometimes to idolize the past. Because, guys, the more we obsessed with the past, the more people in the present will die and go to hell. We have a charge from God,
a mission from God, to reach our world, and we want to give it our very best shot.

You can see this stuff working itself out all over Capital City Christian Church.

- We had a meeting last Wednesday in which our church family approved spending some money on some renovations. We have a pretty nice facility, but it’s hard to find your way around if you’re new. And some of it is clean, but not really attractive. We’re going to try to address that stuff.

- We try to use the technologies of our world, and even some of their music, and their video clips, and their books, and their metaphors to point people to Jesus – like Paul did in Athens. We look for things we can use as a bridge to Jesus. We look for what they hunger for, and point them to Jesus, who is the only one who can satisfy. Paul said, “What you worship as unknown, I’ll show you who he really is.” When we were working on this sermon Randy mentioned that Jesus would have listened to country music. That’s going too far – classic rock, maybe.

- Here’s kind of a weird one, for us old guys. In this new world people want to belong before they will believe. Being connected is so important. Not many people study themselves into being a Christian any more. They are drawn to Jesus as they connect with Christians. We want people to feel welcome here, no matter who you, where you’ve been, what you’ve done, what you look like, what you believe. As you become part of our family, you’ll understand what makes us tick, and you’ll come to love our Jesus.

- Here’s another one. In our world, at first it’s more important that something works, than that it’s true. People want to know – does it work? It’s not enough for me to tell people that this is God’s truth; I have to show you that God’s way is better than theirs – even when it seems counterintuitive. Our preaching, our teaching, has to be flat out practical. Here’s another piece of that. They need to see us walk the walk, not just talk the talk. They are not going to listen to what we say if how we live life is no different, no better than how they live life. Guys, if we want people to know Jesus, we have to let God change us.
• Here’s another one. We have to be less confrontational, and more conversational, if we are going to lead these people to Jesus. These are not Jerusalemites who know God’s truth and who need a kick in the rear end. These are Athenians who are so often clueless, about the real God, and how to live life with God. And that changes the way we preach: less preaching at, more talking to. Not just telling you what you are doing wrong, but sharing how we struggle together. The preachers have to be a whole lot more transparent, and authentic. And, guys, that’s not the way we were taught. And you have to be a whole lot more transparent, and authentic, if they are going to follow you. You don’t need to be a perfect Christian to lead people to Jesus, you have to be an honest one. We stumble and fall a lot. Then we get up and try again. That’s cool.

The message never changes, the methods must; because we committed to reaching “our” world. We are not here to mock our world, or decry its failures, or to whine about what use to be. We are here to bring this people face to face with Jesus. The lost are not our enemies, they are our mission. Guys … loving God means loving who God loves. We are here to love our God with all our heart, all our mind, all our strength, and we here to love our neighbors as much as or even more than we love ourselves – because that’s one way we love our God with all our heart, all our mind, all our strength. And guys, some day I want to hear those words from him – more than just about anything else I want to hear those words from him: Well done, good, and faithful servant.