

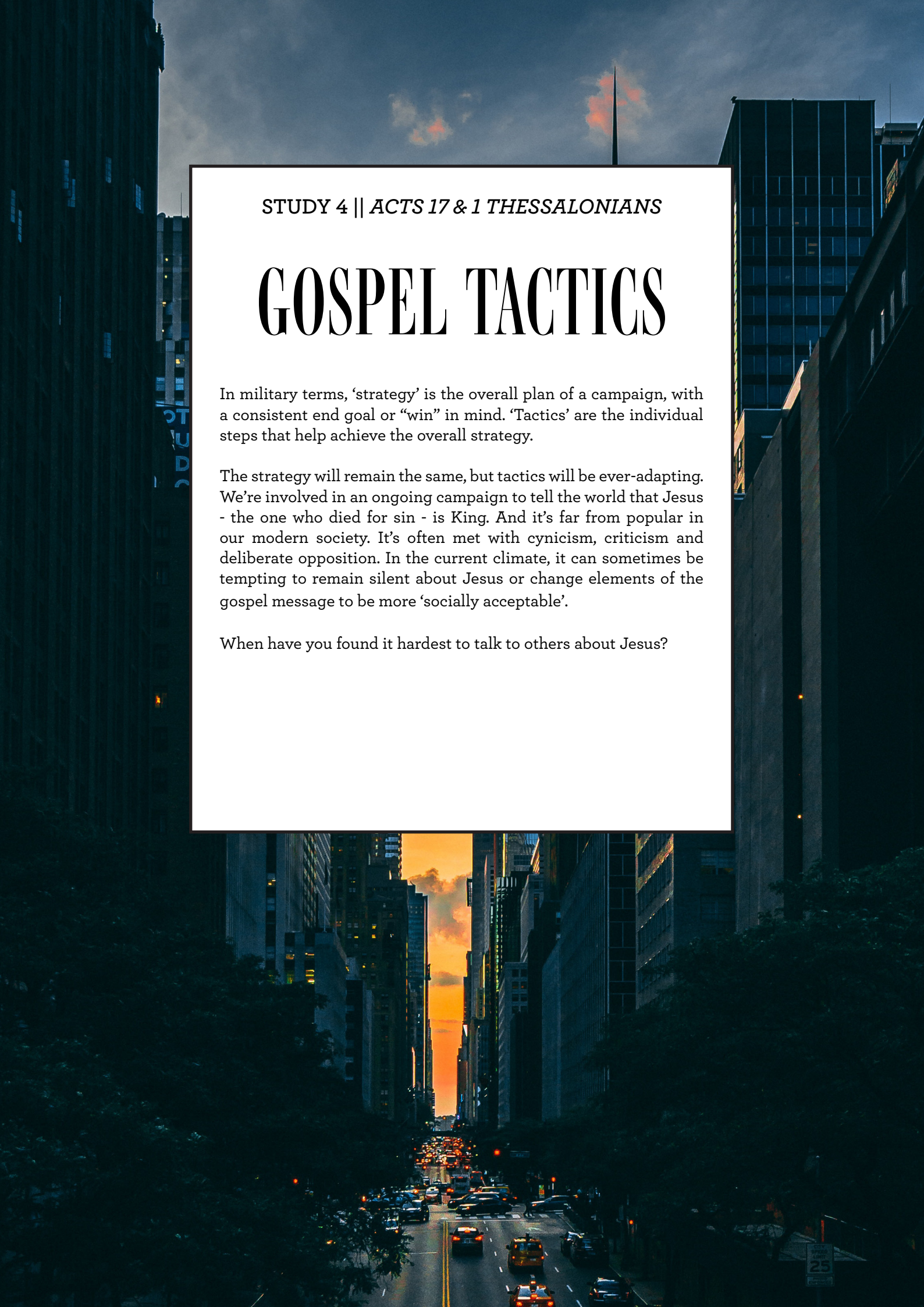
STUDY 4 || ACTS 17 & 1 THESSALONIANS

GOSPEL TACTICS

In military terms, 'strategy' is the overall plan of a campaign, with a consistent end goal or "win" in mind. 'Tactics' are the individual steps that help achieve the overall strategy.

The strategy will remain the same, but tactics will be ever-adapting. We're involved in an ongoing campaign to tell the world that Jesus - the one who died for sin - is King. And it's far from popular in our modern society. It's often met with cynicism, criticism and deliberate opposition. In the current climate, it can sometimes be tempting to remain silent about Jesus or change elements of the gospel message to be more 'socially acceptable'.

When have you found it hardest to talk to others about Jesus?



GOSPEL STRATEGY

As Paul continues his journey he faces enormous opposition. But his strategy remains the same - keep sharing the gospel no matter the audience, no matter the opposition. The one thing that does change from town to town are the tactics he uses to engage his audience. The gospel remains the same, but he contextualises it to engage people from very different backgrounds.

Read Acts 17:1-15

1. As we saw in study 1, Paul makes a habit of first preaching to the Jews whenever he enters a new town. What is his message to the Jews (v.3)?

2. The gospel is met with with vastly differing responses. What are the contrasting responses Paul's met with?

What's the main difference between those who rejected the gospel and those who accepted it (v4&5)?

3. Why do some of the Jews chase Paul and Timothy out of town (v7)? What motivates their anger (v5)?

4. What justification do the Jews use before the city officials for chasing Paul out of Thessalonica (v7)?

Who are the Jews claiming allegiance to instead of Jesus?

- Paul and Timothy are physically chased out of Thessalonica. They're running for their lives. But as they reach the neighbouring town of Berea, they're met with a very different reception. How do people respond to the gospel in Berea by comparison? What convinces them to accept the gospel?

The Thessalonian Jews are so jealous of Paul's success that they chase him not only out of their town, but out of the neighbouring town as well (v13). Jealousy was the motive when the authorities killed Jesus (Mark 15:10). And we see a replay of the same jealousy in Thessalonica. It's an intense time of persecution for both Paul and the new Christians he leaves behind in Thessalonica.

After being chased out of both Thessalonica and Berea, Paul finds himself in Athens, sharing the gospel with a very different group of people. It will be interesting to see how Paul's tactics change in this new context.

CHANGED TACTICS

Read Acts 17:16-34

- What struck Paul about the spiritual state of Athens?
- How does Paul engage the Athenians with the gospel? Rather than employing the tactic of turning to the Jewish Scriptures, what does he appeal to?

What does Paul call the Athenians to do? How is this similar to the message he delivered in Thessalonica?

What similarities can you see between Athens and Brisbane? What idols (or God-substitutes) are people prone to worship?

- Although initially the Athenians are interested to know more, some in the crowd make fun of Paul's message of the resurrection (v32). How does Paul respond to this criticism? What motivates him to avoid changing the gospel messages despite persecution?

STRATEGIC MEMO

Paul is committed to sharing the gospel with whomever he meets - the one who died for sin is King! And he's unwilling to compromise it, no matter the consequences! His strategy is always to clearly tell others about Jesus. But the tactics he employs to communicate that same message will change depending on the audience and context.

A couple of months after the events we read about in Acts 17, Paul still hasn't heard any news from the new Thessalonian church, and so he sends Timothy to find out what's happened. On Timothy's return, Paul is encouraged to hear the church has not only survived, but is flourishing (1 Thess 3:4-8). In the face of persecution, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to keep holding on to the gospel they were taught.

Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

9. Under what circumstances did Paul arrive in Thessalonica?

10. What were Paul's motives in sharing the gospel? Who was he trying to please?

11. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14. How did the Thessalonians respond to the gospel? Why?

What encouragement does this give you in sharing the gospel with those who you think wouldn't be interested?

It's tempting to remain silent about Jesus, or change elements of the gospel message when a lot of the world doesn't want to hear about a resurrected King who rules over everything - even them! But God has shown the only power to change lives is when the gospel is proclaimed in full! However, there is still a place to contextualize and package the gospel in such a way as to make it more understandable for different audiences.

12. What might it look like to be committed to the same strategy as Paul of sharing the gospel in full, while contextualising it to make it more understandable for your:

- Neighbour
- Muslim Friends
- Teenage Kids
- Work Mates
- Parents