



Course 3, Session 1 Student Notes: Know Who You Serve

The Foundation of Marketing That Tells the Truth

Big Idea: The same truth must be spoken in the language of the person in front of you. You do not change the message, you change the on ramp.

How to use these notes. These are yours to study on your own, before or after the session. Read each section slowly. Under every principle there is a **Notes** space to write what stands out to you, and a **Reflect** question to answer honestly in writing. Keep your Bible nearby. Take about 30 minutes, and end in prayer. Bring your notes and questions to the group.

Open in Prayer

Before you begin, pray this simple prayer, or your own: "Father, You meet each of us right where we are. Teach me tonight to truly know and love the people I am called to serve, so I can speak to them clearly and honestly. Give me a heart of humility, not pride. Amen."

The Scripture for This Session

Read these slowly, out loud if you can:

- **Acts 17:16 to 34** (Paul at the Areopagus, which we study below).
- **1 Corinthians 9:19 to 23**, especially verse 22, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Reflect: Have you ever heard an ad and thought, that is exactly me, how did they know? What made it feel like it was speaking directly to you and not to everyone?

The Big Picture

Let me take the fear out of the word marketing. For a lot of believers, marketing feels slimy, like a used car lot, all pressure and exaggeration. But strip it back to its honest core and marketing is simply this: helping the people who need what you have actually find it. If you have something genuinely good, something that solves

a real problem, then letting the right people know about it is not manipulation, it is a service. Hiding your good work under a bushel does not help anyone. Honest marketing is love that bothers to communicate.

We are beginning Course 3, Marketing That Tells the Truth. In Course 2 you built a clear offer with stacked value at an honest price, but the best offer in the world helps no one if it never reaches the right person, in words they understand. So this course is about honest marketing, and it starts at the foundation: knowing exactly who you are talking to. Over this session we will walk through four truths about knowing your audience, then watch the Apostle Paul do it brilliantly in the most intellectual city of his day. Read each one, write your notes, and answer the reflection.

Principle 1: Marketing Is Not Slimy. It Is Love That Communicates.

The word marketing carries a lot of baggage for Christians, and much of it is deserved, because plenty of marketing really is manipulative. But manipulation is a corruption of marketing, not its essence. At its honest core, marketing is helping the people who need what you have find it. If you genuinely solve a real problem, then letting the right people know about it is a kindness, not a trick.

Think of it this way. Imagine you had the cure for something that was hurting your neighbor, and you kept quiet about it because telling them felt too much like selling. That silence would not be humility. It would be a failure to love. Hiding your good work under a bushel does not serve anyone. So we start this whole course by reframing marketing as a form of love: love that cares enough to communicate clearly, so the right person can find the help they already need.

Reflect: Where has a bad view of marketing kept you quiet about genuinely good work? Whom might you be failing to serve simply because telling them feels uncomfortable?

Notes:

Principle 2: Same Truth, Different On Ramp.

Here is the principle that runs through this whole session: you do not change the truth, you change the on ramp. The message stays the same. The way you open the door, the words, the starting point, the picture you paint, changes depending on who is standing in front of you. A good teacher explains the same truth differently to a child and to a scholar, not because the truth changes, but because love meets people where they are.

Think about how Jesus did this. To a Samaritan woman at a well, He talked about living water. To fishermen, He talked about catching men. To farmers, He told stories about seeds and soil. To a religious scholar like Nicodemus, He spoke of being born again. Same Kingdom, same truth, completely different on ramps, each one chosen because He knew the person in front of Him. This is the heart of honest marketing. You never water down what is true or promise what you cannot deliver. You simply build the doorway out of the world your listener already lives in.

Reflect: What is the one true thing your work offers? Now, what is a different on ramp, a different starting point or picture, you could use to open that door for someone who does not yet share your language?

Notes:

Principle 3: Market to Everyone, and You Reach No One. Get Specific.

Most people market to everyone, which means they market to no one. When you try to speak to the whole world, your message gets so general and so bland that it lands on no one in particular. The fix is counterintuitive but powerful: get specific. Picture one real person. Not a demographic, a person.

What keeps them up at night? What words do they actually use to describe their problem? Where do they already spend their time, online and offline? What have they already tried that did not work? When you can answer those questions, your marketing stops being noise and starts sounding like a conversation that person was already having in their own head. "Small business owners" is not a person. It is a category so broad it says nothing. But one real human, with a name, a worry, and a way of talking, is someone you can actually speak to. And here is the surprise: the more specific you get, the more people feel seen, because real people recognize themselves in a real portrait, never in a vague one.

Reflect: Are you currently trying to speak to everyone? Picture just one real person you serve. What is the single worry that keeps them up at night?

Notes:

Principle 4: Knowing Your Audience Is an Act of Love and Humility.

Knowing your audience is not a marketing trick, it is an act of love and humility. It says, I care enough to understand you, to speak your language, to start where you actually are instead of where it is convenient for me. The opposite, talking only in your own jargon about what impresses you, is a quiet kind of pride. It puts your ego, your vocabulary, and your comfort ahead of the person you claim to serve.

So this session asks you to choose the humble path. Get to know one specific person so well that when they hear you, they feel seen. That takes real work, the work of listening, watching, and stepping into another person's world instead of demanding they step into yours. But it is the work love does. When you speak your customer's language, start from their existing worries, and use their exact words, you are not lowering yourself or compromising anything. You are imitating a God who has always met people where they are, and who came all the way down to us so that we could understand Him.

Reflect: Where have you been using insider language that impresses you but confuses your customer? What would it look like to lay that pride down and start from their world instead?

Notes:

The Story: Paul at the Areopagus (Acts 17:16 to 34)

Read the passage. Paul arrives in Athens, a city full of idols and philosophers, and he is invited to speak at the Areopagus, the intellectual center of the city. Watch how he opens, because it is a master class in knowing your audience. When Paul preached to his fellow Jews, he opened the Hebrew Scriptures, quoted Moses and the prophets, and reasoned from texts they already revered. But here, in front of Greek philosophers who had never read those Scriptures, he does something completely different. He does not start with a single Bible verse. He starts with their world: "I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (17:23). He had walked their city, studied their altars, noticed their hunger. And he says, in effect, that unknown God you already worship, let me tell you who He is.

Then he does something most preachers would never dare. He quotes their own poets: "as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (17:28). He met them in their literature, their language, their starting point. But here is what he did not do: he did not change the truth. He still preached the one true God, the call to repent, the resurrection of Jesus, and the coming judgment. The message was uncompromised. But the on ramp was built entirely from their world. Walk the four moves. Paul studied his audience before he spoke, noticing their altars. He started where they already were, an altar they had built and a poet they already quoted. He used their language, not his insider vocabulary. And he never compromised the truth to win them. Meeting people where they are is not watering down. It is wise love.

Reflect: Who is the specific "Athenian" you are trying to reach, and how well do you actually know their world? What is the "altar" or the "poet" in their life, the thing they already care about, that you could start from?

Notes:

Put It Into Practice

1. Name your one person. Give your ideal customer a name and a one line description. Force specificity, one real person, not a demographic.

The one person I serve (name and one line):

2. Fill in the profile. Answer each of these about that one person, as if describing a friend.

Their biggest worry about this problem:

The exact words they use to describe it:

Where they already spend their time (online and offline):

What they have already tried that did not work:

3. This week's assignment. Have one real conversation with someone who fits your profile. Do not pitch. Just ask about their problem and write down the exact words they use. Bring three of their phrases to the next session, because those words are marketing gold.

Three exact phrases my customer used:

Go Deeper (Optional)

- **Read:** *Building a StoryBrand* by Donald Miller. His central insight is that customers do not care about you, they care about their own problem, and clear marketing makes the customer the hero and you the guide who understands them. Run it through a biblical filter: we make the customer the hero not to flatter or manipulate, but because genuinely serving people means starting with their needs, not our ego.
 - **Listen:** the *Marketing Made Simple* podcast by Donald Miller and J.J. Peterson.
 - **Study:** Acts 17:16 to 34; 1 Corinthians 9:19 to 23.
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Close in Prayer

"Father, thank You that You always meet us where we are, and that You came all the way down to us so we could understand You. Help me love the people I serve enough to truly know them, to speak their language, and to start where they are, so the good I carry actually reaches them. Give me humility instead of pride, and clarity instead of noise. In Jesus' name, Amen."

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