

In Athens

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 both Jews and 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 debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling 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 would like to know what they mean." 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' Acts 17:16-28 (NIV)

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Discussion/Topic Starters (Ice Breakers)

- What are some of the strangest things/ideas/philosophies you've ever heard in the name of "Religion"?
- O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

v.16-28

- O: Per last weeks discussion on the first part of Acts 17, it is impressive that Paul was able to speak with equal ease to religious people in the synagogue, to casual passer-by in the city square, and to highly sophisticated philosophers. How does Paul open his sermon at the meeting of the Areopagus? (v22-23)?
- O: How does Paul take what was there in the marketplace and use it to turn the people's attention to the true God revealed in Jesus Christ?
- O: What differences does Paul draw between the idols and the true God?
- O: How does Paul call them to repentance? (v29-31)
- I: What are the main points of Paul's message (how would you summarize it, I (Keith) see 5 main points)?
- I: Paul speaks of "your objects of worship (v.23)." What are some of the objects of worship for people in our culture?
Follow-up: How does the message of Christ speak to these objects of worship?
- A: Paul's different approaches to sharing the Gospel (last week we looked at the first part of Acts 17) shows his understanding of culture and his willingness to communicate with people where they are.
Question: What are the different groups or cultures that you interact with?
Follow-up: What are the way you might be tempted to compromise the message of the gospel as you communicate it to certain people?
Follow-up: What do you need to do and know in order to more effectively communicate the good news about Jesus to people in your life or different cultures?
- A: In his sermon, Adam focused on v.26 and the phrase "[God] marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands." Then Adam used that reality, that God has folks where they are and when they are so then can hear the Gospel message) to then look at how Paul responded to folks and shared the good news. Was there any stirring in your heart during Adam's message? Any next steps? Any person (neighbors/co-workers/friends) come to mind during the sermon?

Recommended Follow-up:

- Read: Next week's sermon (6/16/2013) will focus on Acts 18.18-28. Take time prior to next Sunday to read & study the passage, pray through the passage, meditate on the passage, etc.

* As discussed in Riverside's HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid "go through this guide word-for-word." There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guides rely heavily on a few other study guides; including: Serendipity NT for Groups by the Young Life ministry (ISBN is N/A), "Acts: Seeing God's Power in Action" by Phyllis LePeau (ISBN 9780830830077), "Acts: Seeing the Spirit Work" by John Stott (ISBN 0851113907), "Acts" by N.T.Wright (ISBN 9780830821853), "Acts" by NavPress (ISBN 0891091122), "Acts" by Blackaby (ISBN 9781418526429), "Acts: The Spread of the Gospel" by John MacArthur (ISBN 9781418508746), "Book of Acts" by Max Lucado (ISBN 0849953006).