

Religion & Relationship

Acts 17

Icebreaker: *What do you do in your spare time?*

Following their mission into Macedonia, Paul went south into Greece to wait on Silas and Timothy. Athens was a center of cultural and economic influence. One could not walk the streets of Athens without noticing the prominent displays and promotion of a wide assortment of false “gods.” To be a part of ancient society, one was expected to pay homage to the gods to bring favor on the family and the society at large. Paul has seen what real deity is all about back on the road to Damascus. Compared to Christ the idols of Athens were laughable at best.

Acts 17:16-21

What two places did Paul spend time reasoning with the people of Athens?

- Synagogues & Marketplace

What level of interest did his audience have in his message?

- Some were belligerent
- Some wanted to know more/were curious

Luke says these Athenians did nothing but sit around and talk about the newest ideas. *Is there a difference between knowing just to know something and knowing something so you can apply it to your life?*

- Some Bible scholars don't believe in God—head knowledge is not enough.
- Faith has to come in at some point

We can philosophize all day in our Bible classes and LIFE groups but until we make application and our lives change it has done little good. When the Word of God takes root in our lives it should grow and change us.

Acts 17:22-31

Which of their altars does Paul bring up?

- “Altar to an unknown God”

Is it possible to worship something or someone you know little about?

- It is nearly impossible—that is “just in case” kind of worship. Just in case there is a god out there I better say some prayers.

Why is it important that we know God before we worship him?

- So we can know what to praise him for
- So our hearts will appreciate him for who he is and what he has done

How valuable are religious actions without a relationship with God?

Paul proceeds to teach them a few things about the one, true God. Paul is saying it did not take all of these little gods to build the world and to create mankind. It was all done by the one true God. *Why did God do all that he has done (17:27)?*

- So that we would seek and find Him—the result would be eternal life.

Matthew 7:7-8 says that if you ask you will receive, if you seek you will find, and if you knock God will open the door.

What does it mean to seek God...sit around and philosophize about him or something else?

- Seeking God is more than just having the right opinions. Seeking God requires an attitude of humility and surrender. Normally seeking is about finding where something is. Seeking God is finding out more about who he is and is about developing a relationship with Him.

Paul says that they are the offspring of God and that God wants them to repent because there is more to life than the cradle to the grave. *What sign does Paul point to says there is more to life than meets the eye?*

- The resurrection of Jesus Christ

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the bedrock of our faith. It is the dividing line between those who accept and reject the message. Some people want to say Jesus was a good teacher but that he was not God. That doesn't cut it. Paul says that the time of judgment is coming and we must repent to get our lives in line with the will of God and mend our relationship with Him because one day we too will be raised from the dead.

How does the thought of your future resurrection motivate you toward holy living?

- It motivates some through fear
- It motivates others through hope
- Hope is the more healthy response but fear is okay for a time until we mature beyond it.

Acts 17:32-33

What was the reaction of the people of Athens?

- Some believed and some did not

We are faced with the same thing today. Some people may sneer at the message but it still must be preached because the same message will turn the hearts of others toward God. There are many religious people out there who have yet to build a relationship with God—they are going through the motions without really thinking about what they are doing or who they are worshipping. Let us make sure our worship is founded in a relationship and that we encourage others to do the same.

Application

What is something you can do to make the message of Christ more understandable to your non-Christian friends?

What will help you persevere in telling others about God and Christ even though some people may sneer at you and reject the message?

Paul seemed to have some down time because he was waiting on Silas and Timothy to arrive. *How could you use your spare time this week to make the difference in someone else's life?*

Pray that we can be difference makers in our spheres of influence and that by our lives and words we can help those who do not know God understand God more clearly through us.