

5. The Unknown God

Acts 17:16-34

Introduction (v16-23)

1. God is the creator of the world -
you can't domesticate him (v24)
2. God is the Sustainer of the world -
he doesn't need us (v25)
3. God is the Goal of life -
he isn't far from us (v27-28)
4. God is the Judge of the world -
he isn't a harmless idol (v29-31)

Growth Group questions

Getting started: *What are the difficulties about trying to explain the gospel to people who don't know anything about Jesus or the Bible? Try and think of people you know who have no church background. Where would you have to start if you were to talk to them about Jesus?*

READ Acts 17:16-34

1. What does Paul see in Athens? How does that make Paul feel? Why does Paul feel like this?
2. What does Paul then do? John Stott suggests 'If we do not speak like Paul because we do not feel like Paul, this is because we do not see like Paul... he saw men and women, created by God in the image of God, giving to idols the homage which was due to him alone.' How might we need to learn from Paul how to see? Why should we bother to tell people about Christ?
3. Epicureans didn't believe in an afterlife and therefore thought that pleasure was what life is all about, whilst Stoics believed it was important to be self-sufficient. How do we see their influence on people today? How does Paul both connect and disagree with each of these groups in his speech to the Areopagus (the great Athenian debating chamber)?
4. Where does Paul start with these biblically illiterate Greeks (v22-23)? What is he trying to do? It might look as though he is praising them, but how does he later show that their views are not only inadequate but wrong (v30-31)?
5. Look carefully at Paul's speech(v24-31). What does he tell them about the God of the Bible? If you were trying to talk to people about Christ, would you have included these things? Any surprises?
6. How does Paul make his points? He doesn't use his Bible (but its all biblical!). How can we learn from Paul in trying to reach our unchurched friends? How might you try and tackle similar subjects with people you know today?
7. How do people react to Paul? How is this helpful and realistic for us? How does this compare with Paul's speech at Lystra to nonJews (14:14-17)?
8. What is Paul prepared to do to reach people for Christ? How can we learn from him?