

## Community Group Discussion Questions

“Unknown (g)od” Acts 17:16-31 April 27, 2019

### Getting Started

The way you define God will always be the way you describe God, but most importantly display God.

The people of Athens, Greece were known and respected as the wisest in the world. This was the home of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates. Yet with all their wisdom, and their constant search for new ideas, they did not know the God of the Bible. They were trying to fill the ‘God shaped hole’ in their heart, but had nothing to fill it with. Before you were a Christian, what things did you try to fill your life with to find happiness, meaning, and significance?

### Going Deeper:

**Provoked by a Problem:** *“his spirit was **provoked** within him as he saw that the city was full of idols”* (Vs.16)

The word used for ‘provoked’ is the word we use for having a paroxysm, or a fit. Paul was really upset. He couldn’t stand it that all these wise people were worshiping idols in ignorance. He had to do something to educate them about God as Creator and Jesus as Risen Savior. When you look around you at all the people you know who aren’t living for Jesus, what emotions come up in you? Is that okay, or should you feel something more? What would make your emotions change? What do you think God wants you to do for those people?

**Power in His Preaching:** *“And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “**May we know what this NEW TEACHING** is that you are presenting?”* (Vs.19)

We need to realize that our culture hasn’t rejected the Jesus of the Bible, just the pathetic way most Christians live out their faith. How does your living out your faith draw the attention of those who are seeking something more in life?

**Platformed with a Purpose:** “So Paul, **standing in the midst** of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.” (Vs.22)

**Wired to Worship:** “For as I passed along and observed the **objects of your worship**” (Vs. 23)

**Wonder of Worship:** “I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as **unknown** this I **proclaim** to you.” (Vs. 23)

- **Can't be Contained:** “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, **does not live in temples** made by man” (Vs.24)
- **Heaven is not Lacking:** “nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since **he himself gives** to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Vs.25)
- **Reveals your Significance:** “**having determined** allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place” (Vs.26)
- **Interested in being Found:** “that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and **find him**. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being.” (Vs.27-28)
- **Set Day for His Return:** “because he has **fixed a day** on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.” (Vs.31)
- **Triumphant over Death:** “and of this he has given assurance to all by **raising him from the dead**.” (Vs.31)

Paul knows that these people don't have any knowledge of the Old Testament (the only part of the Bible available at that time). So, instead of quoting Bible verses to them, he starts with the obvious evidence of God seen through nature. ‘God made the world.’ You don't need to worship little (g)ods, when my God is the only God necessary for all that you can see! You can't contain Him! He needs nothing from you! He has created humanity, and limits what nations can do and how long they can last.

And this same all-powerful God wants you to find Him. He knows you're looking for something, but that something is actually a Someone! That Someone is Jesus, who died to save you and bring you into a personal relationship with God. And Jesus is qualified to judge your life because He not only died, but rose again!

Accepting the reality that most people in our culture don't know or believe the Bible either, how does Paul's approach to the 'wise' people of Greece impress you? How could you use a similar explanation to share the Gospel with your friends?

**Takeaway:** The "X" that marks the spot is where a God who may feel unknown becomes known because of the choice that you make to not just regard Him, but reveal Him.

Another takeaway from this episode in Paul's life is that we have to keep telling the story of Jesus. Paul talked to the Jews in the synagogue, everyday people in the marketplace, and the 'wise ones' in the Academy. He wasn't afraid to talk about Jesus anywhere or to anyone. Keep studying your culture, and learn new ways to start spiritual conversations. For another Biblical example of Paul's understanding of reasoning from Creation, see Romans 1:18-23.