

St John's Meads –Home Groups

INTRODUCTION

Paul's sermon to the Athenians in Acts 17 has long divided opinion but its place in the canon of scripture means that we do well to pay attention to what it has to say to us. In particular what it has to teach us about presenting the good news of Jesus Christ to a disbelieving audience. An audience, much like the post Christian world we face today that is both marked out by a pick and mix spirituality, an ignorance of scripture and a deep suspicion of anyone who wants to claim scripture as authoritative.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Acts 17:16-34. In what ways do you think the religious climate during that time is similar to the religious landscape today?
2. The problem for the Athenians was that they had many gods but very little certainty. (So uncertain that they created a statue to an Unknown god just to cover the uncertainty that they had missed one out!) How do you think uncertainty manifests itself in our world today?
3. Paul resists criticism* affirming them in their search for truth (v22). In place of criticism Paul is creative in his presentation of the gospel even drawing on the words of the Athenian's own philosophers (v28).
 - i) How do you feel about Paul referencing their philosophers?
 - ii) When ministers make the Declaration of assent at their ordination, they affirm their loyalty to the Church of England's inheritance of faith and accept their share in the responsibility to proclaim the faith 'afresh in each generation'. From what we have read and learnt of Paul's message to the Athenians what might this mean for us today as we seek to reach out to the next generations that have an equally limited knowledge of the bible?
4. Without direct reference to scripture (largely unknown or of no authority as far as his Greek audience was concerned) Paul outlines the gospel. Read verses 22-31 and see if you can identify these major themes from our Big Bible Story series:
 - 1) God creates
 - 2) God Sustains (calls and saves)
 - 3) God Reigns
 - 4) God Loves (as a Father)
 - 5) God Judges

*Note that Paul's use of ignorant in v23 was not intended as confrontational. He merely states what they have observed themselves that there is a god who is unknown to them and he intends to make that god known to them.

Pray: *Pray for those who feel far off from God that you know. Father in you we live and breathe and have our being. We thank you that you give purpose and direction to our lives and certainty of a future with you through the death and resurrection of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We remember those who live in fear and uncertainty asking that you would equip me and your whole church to proclaim the gospel afresh to each new generation. Amen*