

Paul Among the Athenians *[Good News On the Move]*

Acts 17:16-34 (preached on January 25, 2009)

Note to Discussion Leaders: Please remember to start by reading the Bible passage as a group. While this is a “sermon discussion” guide, it’s vital that our reflections and applications are grounded in scripture. In a similar vein, do your best to help group members to link their discussion points to the scripture text. Don’t skip over all the questions that invite the group to observe and interpret specific verses in the passage.

READ Acts 17:16-34 (OT reading: Psalm 8)

REFLECT

1. What are some of the similarities between the culture of ancient Athens and that of Washington, DC? Are there similarities between the beliefs of the Stoics and Epicureans (vv. 18, 22, 32, etc.) and the beliefs found in our city?

2. How did Paul respond to the Athenians’ worship of idols in his actions and attitudes (vv. 16-17)? How would you describe your attitude or emotional response towards the unbelieving world around you (indifference, compassionate distress, sincere confusion, arrogant disapproval)? Why do you think many Christians tend only to berate and criticize the culture or retreat and distance themselves from it?

3. If you’re a Christian, what would it look like for you to “reason” in the “marketplace” with those who aren’t Christians (v. 17)? Why is it important to remember that there will always be a diversity of responses to gospel truth (vv. 18, 34)?

4. Consider how Paul communicates with the people — what he says (and doesn’t say), how he says it, how he crafts his argument, the sources he appeals to. How does Paul adapt his message to his audience (compare Acts 13:15-47)?

