

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide  
SB 6.13.21

YOU CAN KNOW GOD – ACTS 17:16-34

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Today, many movies are based on comic book superheroes. In fact, the top 100 superhero movies have grossed over \$50 Billion. The world idolizes movies that portray superhuman, god-like strength and power. The same was true with the ancient people of Athens, Greece. Athens, a city on the East side of the Aegean Sea, was the metropolitan city of the time, comparable today to New York City. It was a religious city with over 3,000 stone idols. Practically every false deity on earth was worshiped there. Paul was familiar with philosophers who taught there and desired to share the gospel with them. He reasoned, "I perceive that in all things you are very religious, for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To the Unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:22-24, NKJV). Let's get into our study.

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What stood out most or spoke to you from Pastor Ray's message this past weekend?
2. Why do you think the world often idolizes the portrait of superhuman abilities?

**IN PREPARATION FOR TODAY'S STUDY HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 17:16-21**

Paul was upset in his spirit because he witnessed idols of stone receiving the worship God alone deserves. Stone idols cannot see, hear, speak, or feel. The two distinct philosophies of Athens at the time included Epicureanism and Stoicism. The Epicureans lived for fleshly pleasure. The Stoics believed that everything happened by fate and that one should accept whatever without emotion. Both philosophies worshiped false idols, including the idol of an unknown God. The unknown God they were really seeking was Jesus.

1. God alone deserves our worship. Describes what it means to worship God? (1 Chronicles 16:29)
2. St. Augustine stated, "Our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in God." How might the world relate to this statement? How might you relate to this statement?
3. Epicureans were followers of Epicurus who lived 341-270 BC and taught happiness was to be found in freedom from fear of any god and death and practicing what brings one the most pleasure in this life. How might this sound familiar to the culture of today? (Psalm 37:4, 126:2)
4. Stoics were followers of Zeno who lived 334-262 B.C. Stoics are known for their views on the acceptance of fate. What is the fate of an unbeliever compared to the fate of a believer? (Romans 6:23)
5. Pastor Ray said, the imagination of people who worship idols are given over to something not of God which opens the door for demonic activity. What idols today open the door for demonic activity? How might a Christian avoid worshiping the idols today? (EPH 6:13-18)

## Visitation/Restoration in 2021

### Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

#### HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 17:22-34

Paul presented a masterpiece sermon on Mars Hill. He began with the building a bridge acknowledging the Athenians were very religious. He then reasoned about the account of creation. He introduced God as the One who made the world and everything in it. Paul next discussed the origin of the human race. We are the offspring of God in the sense He created us, but only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if we are offspring, then it is impossible to think of God as a stone idol. Exposing their folly, Paul goes on to state that for many centuries, God has overlooked the ignorance of gentiles. But now, He commands all men everywhere to repent. This is urgent, because there is a day, He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man Jesus, who was raised from the dead.

1. When sharing the gospel, what does it mean to build a bridge? (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)
2. Missionaries tell us the best place to begin in teaching pagans about God is starting with the account of creation. How might you explain the account of creation to an atheist? (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16)
3. God's purpose for creating us is that we might find Him and know Him (Acts 17:27-29). What does it mean to "find" Him and "know" Him?
4. There will be an appointed time of judgement and God demands that all men repent prior to judgement (30-31). What does it mean to truly repent?
5. The same Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in us who have repented and believe. How is this encouraging to you?

#### Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

In 600 B.C., a deadly plague, perhaps similar to COVID-19, broke out in Athens. A poet named Epimenides, advised the city to bring black and white sheep and let them wander. Wherever the sheep laid down, they would offer a sacrifice and make an idol. The sheep eventually lied down on Mars Hill and sacrifices to the "unknown god" where made. It is said, the plague then ended. To this day, those altars may be found in different parts of Athens with no name inscribed upon them. Fast forward to first century Athens, Paul was invited to speak at that same Mars Hill. As Paul was pointing to these same altars, he said, "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things" (24-25). You can't give anything to God because He doesn't need anything from you. But you need an awful lot from Him! You need God for life. "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (28).

1. Describe what your Mars Hill might look like today?
2. Will you go to that Mars Hill and proclaim the gospel?

#### PRAYER

Lord, thank You that You are not hidden from us, and you are not unknown. Your Word says, "seek and we will find". Thank You for creating us and providing a way. We repent of our foolish ways. Please forgive us and guide us on the path of righteousness. You truly are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Lord, as we go, bless us, keep us, and may your light shine upon us.

***"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."***  
**Luke 11:9**