

Key Scripture

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city.¹⁷ He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there.¹⁸ He also had a debate with some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. When he told them about Jesus and his resurrection, they said, "What's this babbler trying to say with these strange ideas he's picked up?" Others said, "He seems to be preaching about some foreign gods." ... ²²So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way,²³ for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about. Acts 17:16-18, 22-23

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What do you do when you are waiting? Do you tend to waste the time or redeem the time?
- What makes you mad or sad or glad? What do you see in the world around you that makes you pound your fist in anger or puts a smile on your face?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- What things do you tend to waste your time on? How can we learn to redeem our time?
- What would it look like for the modern church to follow Paul's example to be the church in the marketplace?
- We like to think we don't struggle with idolatry because we don't have little statues we worship. The truth is we're just more sophisticated than that with our idolatry. How do we struggle with idolatry today?

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- How do we speak the truth of the Gospel with grace and love to an increasingly unbelieving world? Why should we/should we not debate them and their philosophies?
- When you hear about the shift in our culture towards no religious affiliation, what emotions rise up in you? How can we tap into the spiritual instinct of the "none's" to help them connect with the "Unknown God?"
- Pastor Lane said it's time for the church to stop cursing the darkness and instead light a candle and compete for the truth in the marketplace of ideas. How do we do that?

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

Father, fill us with your Spirit and give us the boldness to walk into our Areopagus and compete for the truth instead of cursing the darkness. Amen

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Make a plan to redeem the time while you are waiting. Ask God for divine opportunities to minister to people.
- Find one thing you can do to light a candle instead of cursing the darkness.
- Pray for the "None's" to get to know Jesus.