

# PAUL IN ATHENS

## Acts 17:16-32

### **Introduction**

Paul found himself in a city that was culturally sophisticated and aesthetically beautiful, yet morally decadent and spiritually bankrupt. Religion, they believed, was fine as long as one doesn't take it too seriously. These words could describe the condition of our culture, too. We have never been more sophisticated, more advanced, yet more spiritually unengaged than we are now. Although we've never been more developed, we've also never been more disinterested in God. So think about this question: what should Christians do and how should Christians react to a society that is both disinterested and unengaged in Christianity?

### **Scripture for study**

Acts 17:16-32

### **Message Outline**

**What Paul Saw (v16)**

**What Paul Felt (v16)**

**What Paul Did (v17-21)**

**What Paul Said (v22-23)**

Paul talked about God in five ways...

- God is the creator of the universe (v24)
- God is the sustainer of life (v25)
- God is the ruler of all (v26-27)
- God is the Father of human beings (v28-29)
- God is the Judge of the world (v30-31)

## **Discussion Questions**

1. How do you believe our culture thinks about Christianity?
2. What are some of the ways culture has (or is) rejected Christianity?
3. When Paul walked around Athens, he saw idolatry. When you walk around your neighborhood, what do you see?
4. The idolatry of Athens provoked a “holy distress” in Paul’s heart. How is this “holy distress” different from the anger the Bible warns us against?
5. Paul interacted with Athenians in three venues: in the synagogue, in the *agora* (the marketplace), and in the *Areopagus* (the philosophical debate forum). What could be the counterparts to these venues in our culture? Which of these venues would be easiest for you to speak in?

## **Review and Reflection**

Paul was provoked in his spirit by the idolatry of Athens. Maybe our prayer today needs to be, “Lord, provoke our spirits by the idolatry and unbelief of our world, too.”