



Engaging Athens

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Acts 17:16-34

POST-CHRISTIAN METRICS

The level of irreligion in America depends on how you measure it. And the vitality of faith in America is much more than simply how people label themselves. Barna Group tracks the following 15 metrics related to faith, which speak to the lack of Christian identity, belief and practice. (% of all U.S. adults)



* in the last week
** in the last year

Living in a Post-Christian Society

“What we call a post-Christian culture strikingly resembles the pre-Christendom era—before Constantine, when the church was a fringe, marginal, prophetic body. Before it became mainstream, accessible, and synonymous with apple pie and Chevrolet. And a pre-Christendom era demands a pre-Christendom church.” Calude Alexander in Christianity Today, Fall 2017

Paul's Ministry to Athens



Luke's Purpose

“Rabbinic stories of rabbis defeating philosophers in debate were meant to underline the claim that whatever Gentile intellectuals could do, students of Torah could do better; such claims serve to authenticate a minority culture or intellectual tradition in light of the dominance of a larger culture. Sages became an increasingly important subject for biography in late antiquity, and Luke’s interest in Paul’s prowess as a teacher serves both the historical record and Luke’s apologetic interests. With Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, as well as the distinguished Areopagus, his foil, Paul advances the intellectual respectability of the Christian message for members of Luke’s audience for whom this would prove a matter of serious interest.” – Craig Keener

Epicureans

- Founder: Epicurus (341-270 B.C.)
- The ultimate purpose or goal in life is to attain pleasure.
- Pleasure = absence of pain.
- Gods don't play a major role in day to day life.

Stoics

- Zeno (334-262 B.C.)
- Pantheistic
- Fate/Determinism
- Humans can become perfect if they live with the divine plan of reality.
- The logos

The Areopagus



- God is the creator of all things. (v.24)
- God does not live in shrines or temples (v.24b)
- God does not need anything. (v.25)
- God is the creator of all mankind (v.26)
- We are to seek God (v.27)
- God is near (v.27-28)
- God is our Father (v.29)

- 29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Acts 17:29-31

Application

- Like Paul we should look for various ways of having both religious and gospel conversations with others.
- We should work hard to understand the philosophies of our day.
- We should work hard to find common ground with those who oppose the faith.
- We should establish the more basic things and move to the less basic.
- We boldly proclaim the resurrection of Christ as not only the basis but also the evidence for our faith.