

## WORSHIP

### SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

God is Here, This God He is Our God, Made Me Glad, You, You are God Alone, Your Grace Still Amazes Me

## WELCOME

What do you observe in our culture today especially in relation to the spiritual or religious practices of the people?  
Are you deeply disturbed by what you see? Why or why not?

## WORD

### ACTS 17:16-21

<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. <sup>18</sup> And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," — because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?" <sup>20</sup> For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." <sup>21</sup> (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)"

Continue reading the succeeding verses of **chapter 17**.

We are at the tail end of Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey. In the beginning of **Acts 17**, we were with Paul and Silas in Thessalonica and then in Berea, also joined by Timothy. Now we find Paul, alone, in Athens.

**Acts 17:16-34** is known as Paul's Mars Hill Sermon – it is one of the areas in the Bible that show us how to tell people who have a totally different worldview about the wonderful truth of God and His offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

### KNOW THE CULTURE

Culture is the way of life of a group of people, the way they do things. It is the outlook, attitudes, values, morals, goals, and customs shared by a society.

While Paul was waiting for Timothy and Silas in Athens, *his spirit was provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols (v16)*.

Athens is like the capital of the world back then. It was the birthplace of philosophers. That city had so many idols that they say it was easier to find an idol than a person!

Are we much different today? Tim Keller defines an idol as "anything more important to you than God. Anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God. Anything you seek to give you what only God can give." Anything can be an idol – even the best things in life – our dreams, ministry, job, achievements, kids, etc. We were created to worship and whatever we worship, we will serve, and whatever we serve controls us. If we worship

something that isn't deserving of worship, it will corrupt and destroy us.

Paul was deeply disturbed by what he saw. Do we feel the same way when we see the world around us? Because of Christ, we should not be provoked to an anger that is proud, but to a sadness that disturbs us within because we see people who have not tasted the goodness of God and so are worshiping whatever or whoever they can.

To see the culture we have to first see what's really going on in our own hearts... then our eyes will be clear to see the culture in the context of God. **We should know our culture with the goal of making Christ known.** If we want to do our best, let's take time to find out where people are coming from. If we really love someone, we would want to know more about them so we can better understand them and know how to reach out to them.

### TAKE A STAND

In **Acts 17:22-ff**, we saw Paul making a stand for the Gospel. Paul knew the culture and was able to establish a common ground with his audience. He stated his observations – how religious they were and the altar he found with the inscription "to the unknown god." Paul uses this as the springboard to making Christ known, as a bridge to the gospel.

Paul serves as a great example for us - how we can connect with people and translate our faith, in order to win some for Christ. The question is, are we ready and willing to take a stand where we are - in our family, school, workplace,

# WORD (cont'd)

industry? Let us ask God for the wisdom, courage, and strength to be able to do so. Let us be good stewards of the platforms God has given us and shine for His glory!

## TEACH GOD'S WORD

In **Acts 17:24-ff** Paul begins his defense by giving them the right theology about God – God as our Creator, the sovereign Lord who is not served by human hands but gives life to all. The Athenians thought they were a superior and better race so Paul challenged that in **verses 26-27** saying that God made from one man every nation and determined their appointed time and place that they would seek God. Paul also quoted their own poets in **verse 28** as a bridge to point them to God's truth. Finally, he presented God as a judge and calls them to repent in **verses 30-31**.

In **Acts 17:32-34** we see the different responses to Paul's sermon. Some began to sneer, some wanted to hear more, and some joined him and believed. **When we make Christ known, not everyone will believe. Let us do our part and leave the results to God.**

We may find ourselves making mistakes as we try to make Christ known. When this happens, we can take them to God and ask Him to make up for our mistakes. There will be challenges but let us remind ourselves of **Acts 1:8** – the Holy Spirit empowers us to be witnesses! If we spend time in God's word and know our culture, we cannot help but make Him known! Let us remind ourselves of the love of the Heavenly Father each day and carry that love to the people around us (**John 17:23**).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)*

1. Do you find yourself at times conforming to the patterns of this world? How can you free yourself from "idols"?
2. Based on your observations on our culture today, how can you better reach out to the people around you?
3. Are you taking a stand where you are – in your family, school, workplace, or industry? How can you make Christ known in your spheres of influence?

# WORKS

## PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Know the culture of the people in your Pray-Care-Share list. Get to know them better and find out where they are coming from so you can better connect and reach out to them. Use what you will find out as a bridge to share the gospel to them!

## WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

### I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

### II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants
- A God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

### III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

### IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

### V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends