



SERIES: ACTS - WHEN THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN
MESSAGE TITLE: "THE INTELLECT OF THE EMPIRE"

SPEAKER: BRAD WILLIAMS
DATE: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2020

MESSAGE SUMMARY

BIBLICAL TEXT(S): *Acts 17:16-34*

While Paul is in the city of Athens, he spends time in the marketplace, the center of ancient life. He starts debating with some philosophers there and they invite him to the Areopagus to share his ideas. The speech that he gives there is one of his most famous and most studied in the book of Acts. How Paul responds to the people in Athens and their philosophy has a lot to teach us today about how we can engage in spiritual conversations with those around us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message. These can help your group understand and apply the teaching more profitably

LEAN IN

These are icebreakers and warm ups, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What's one story, idea or principle that sticks out to you from this week's sermon?
2. If you had to distill your philosophy of life down to one sentence, what would it be?
3. Outside of the Bible, what's one song lyric, poem, movie quote, or book that has impacted your life?
4. What was your high/low for this past week (or since the group last met)? What was the best thing that happened and the worst thing that happened?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions about the Bible passage(s) and observations about what's been read. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.

1. What did Paul do and where did he go while he was in Athens?
2. How did the people in Athens respond to him? What did they ask him to do?
3. What kind of altar did Paul refer to in his speech to the Areopagus? How does Paul relate this altar to his gospel message?
4. What writings does Paul reference in this speech? How is this similar or different to how Paul has supported other speeches in the book of Acts?
5. What is Paul's "call to action" in this speech? How would you summarize it in your own words?

cont.

CONTINUED:

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.

1. In his sermon, Pastor Brad talked about how “the marketplace” was the center of life in the ancient world, where people bought, sold, heard the latest news, and met their friends. Do we have anything like this in our own time? What are some places/things that might be similar?
2. What did you learn about the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers from this week’s sermon? How do you see these same philosophies of life at work in our own world?
3. Pastor Brad claimed that the altar to an unknown God was there because the people still felt like they were missing something, even with all their other gods and temples. How do you see people experiencing lack or something missing in their lives today? How do people try to fill this gap?
4. Paul’s use of the Greek’s own poets and philosophers shows that even those who don’t know God can speak truth, even truth about God. Where have you seen this same phenomenon today?
5. How would you explain the idea of repentance to someone outside the church/someone who didn’t know anything about God?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.

1. What do you think is the “marketplace” in your own life? What might it look like for you to engage others in spiritual conversations in that space?
2. Most of us tend to drift towards one of the two philosophies discussed in this week’s sermon—epicurean (materialistic and pleasure-seeking) or stoic (moralistic). Which one do you think you most naturally drift towards? How does the Gospel help you see things more clearly?
3. Where have you experienced something missing or lacking in your own life, either in the past or today? How has God helped you fill those gaps or how is he currently helping you?
4. What is your attitude towards truth/books/movies/music/etc. that comes from those outside of the church? How does this passage challenge or encourage you?
5. What has repentance looked like in your own life? How might your own experience with repentance help you to tell someone else about the power of turning to God?

cont.

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LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What's one thing you can do this week to be a better steward of the gospel in the "marketplace" of your life? How can your group support you in this?
2. Who do you know that is currently struggling with feeling like they are missing something? How can you pray for and encourage this person to seek Jesus as the thing they are missing?
3. Where can you find common ground, like Paul did, between the gospel and the world around us through books, movies, music, etc.? How could you use that common ground this week in conversation with those who don't yet know Jesus?

Thanks to Ashleigh Rich and the Adult Discipleship Team for this week's notes and questions, as well as Charissa Burns (@charissaburnsstudio on Instagram) for her illustrated notes, which normally appear on the following page.