

Crossway Life Group, Week of September 8

See sermon notes on [CMC's webpage](#) for background information

Community

Take time to share and pray for each other's concerns and joys.

Scripture: Acts 17:16-34 Sermon: "Greater by Far"

Reading & Discussing Scripture

- **Life's Questions** can be sorted into two categories:
 - **First order questions** regard life's meaning and greatest challenges, such as: what gives meaning to life? What brings true peace? How will I handle life's biggest challenges?
 - **Second order questions** regard important but lesser priority matters, such as: Will I pass this class or get promoted? Do I like my job? Can I pay my bills? Do I have real friends?
 - How might people have a difference between the 'right answers' and 'real answers' to first order questions? Explain.
 - What is dangerous about answering *first* order questions with *second* order answers?
- **Background:** The Apostle Paul was a missionary in the Roman Empire telling people about the Good News of Jesus Christ. Usually Paul spoke to Jews as well as Gentiles who had adopted Jewish beliefs. His sermons showed Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of Judaism. Paul was repeatedly attacked by some Jews and ended up in Athens as a place of safety, where he encounters a Greek setting.
- **Read Acts 17:16-34.** How does Paul adapt his approach to this thoroughly Greek setting as he proclaims truth regarding life's biggest questions?
 - What is significant about meeting in both the synagogue and marketplace?
 - How does Paul build a relational bridge to connect with the Athenians and their culture?
 - What are the main biblical ideas that Paul puts in 'cultural clothing' in order to challenge Athenian idolatry?
 - Based on this passage, how would Paul answer life's biggest questions... what gives meaning to life? What brings true peace? How will I handle life's biggest challenges?
 - What other passages from Paul or other parts of the Bible affirm these answers?
- Do you have any other questions about the Bible passage or the sermon?

The Big Idea

**God is the beginning, middle, and end of all human and natural history
Therefore... God is to be worshiped and feared
before and under and after everything else**

Application & Reflection Questions

- How would you answer life's biggest (first order) questions? (Consider John 17:3)
- How do you genuinely view God in relation to yourself, to other people, and to the joys and trials of life?
- Worship involves recognizing my lowliness as I look up into the unfathomable greatness of God.
 - What competes for your worship of God? What helps you worship His greatness?
 - A risk of growing as a Christian is seeing ourselves as close to God while looking down in judgment on people. How can you avoid the risk of looking down on others in judgment?
- How does a view of God's greatness (loving God) empower joyful service (loving others)? In what ways have you seen this in other people, and in yourself?
- What specific ways can your group members help you in your growth....having a greater view of God, avoid judging others, serving joyfully, growing in ability to relate & communicate well across cultures?

Growing in Cultural Understanding

Difficult cultures and subcultures make different assumptions about what gives meaning to life and brings true peace. What assumptions were a part of your experience growing up? How was that expressed? Is that different from your own assumptions today? If so, in what ways?

Serving beyond ourselves

What are ways that your group can be for the benefit of people beyond yourselves?

Acts 17:16-34 - New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

²⁹ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

³² When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” ³³ At that, Paul left the Council. ³⁴ Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

John 17:3

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.