

**II. Group discussion** *Each number below includes a set of questions that relate to the scripture text. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Acts 17:22-31 aloud.

1. Why do intelligent people place their trust in a statue? Doesn't it seem foolish and illogical?

*For a delightful contrast between worthless idols and an awesome God, read Isaiah 40:18-26 or Jeremiah 10:1-16.*

When we place our hope in something other than God, how is that like idolatry?

*It's the same thing – same emotions & same misplaced hope.*

What is it within human nature that wants to worship something?

2. How could money be an idol, even if you don't have much?

When have you experienced a “market correction” that helped you realize the folly of trusting in wealth?

*The last week of February did it for some stock investors.*

How does tithing help you become less attached to money and more devoted to God?

3. How could relationships become like idols?

What will happen if you place too much of your trust in relationships?

*People will eventually die or let you down.*

4. How could a hobby or interest or job become like an idol?

5. In what ways is God worthy of worship?

Why should we praise him? What are his attributes?

Why should we thank him? What has he done for us?

How does the resurrection of Jesus proclaim that God is alive and active in the world?

6. How did Paul begin this conversation with Greek philosophers? How did he connect with their lives and interests?

*He affirms them for being conscientious about honoring deity.*

What can we learn from Paul about sharing the Jesus story?

What do you have in common with your non-Christian friends?

How could common interests lead to a conversation about Jesus?

7. How much of the Old Testament does Paul quote in this speech? How does this contrast to Stephen's speech in Acts 7?

If Paul & Stephen preached the same gospel, why was the message different? *Greeks would have been clueless about OT scriptures.*

What insight does this give you for sharing the gospel with friends?

If you had a friend with no knowledge of the Bible or who believed the Bible was corrupt, how could you tell the person about Jesus?

In what ways could your experience with Jesus be more convincing to a non-Christian than the Bible?

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

After your faith, what is the second-most important thing in your life? How do you keep that from taking first place ahead of God?

Close your meeting with a group reading of Isaiah 40:28-31.

### **III. Other resources**

**The point** – Put God first – ahead of everything in the world!

#### **Prayer ideas**

This would be a good time for a chain prayer, where you invite each person to add a word or phrase. Even most shy people will be okay saying a single word.

Open your prayer with a reading of Jeremiah 10:6-7.

We praise you because of who you are...

We thank you for what you have done...

We ask you to help this person...

Pray for God to guide the Lockes, our leaders and our congregation through the preacher transition.

Close with a group reading of Isaiah 40:28-31.

**Kid-friendly activity.** *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Bring pipe cleaners, clay or some other art material. Ask each person (kids & adults) to make a statue. You could pair up adults & kids for this exercise.

How is your statue like God?

How is your statue different from God?

Read Isaiah 40:18-26 aloud.

Let's all bow and pray to our statues...Why not?

Why do people worship idols?

What are some things that kids today might be tempted to love more than God?

How do you get your heart focused on loving God more than anything else?



March 11, 2007

## **LIFE Group Guide**

### **Acts 17 Putting God first**

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

**The theme: Put God first – ahead of everything in the world.**

"Don't take the godless nations as your models.  
Don't be impressed by their glamour and glitz,  
no matter how much they're impressed.

<sup>3</sup>The religion of these peoples is nothing but smoke.  
An idol is nothing but a tree chopped down,  
then shaped by a woodsman's ax.

<sup>4</sup>They trim it with tinsel and balls, use hammer and nails to keep it upright.

<sup>5</sup>It's like a scarecrow in a cabbage patch—can't talk!  
Dead wood that has to be carried—can't walk!  
Don't be impressed by such stuff.  
It's useless for either good or evil."

<sup>6</sup>All this is nothing compared to you, O God.  
You're wondrously great, famously great.  
-- Jeremiah 10:2-6, from The Message

**Leadership tip:** Use sub-groups to develop leaders and to encourage more sharing. If you have more than 8 present, break into two groups for "the big question" or some other portion of the meeting. Make it your goal to help at least one person grow as a leader each meeting.

**I. Relate** *Use a few of these to introduce the theme and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage individuals through these questions.*

- ❖ What are some ways you have been superstitious? Do you have a rabbit's foot or a lucky outfit? Did you as a kid?
- ❖ What room are guests least likely to see? Where do you cram stuff when the doorbell rings? Is there such a place in your soul?
- ❖ How has Jesus been a blessing? How has your walk with him changed your life?